



Notes

DEVELOPMENT OF WOMEN'S EDUCATION IN INDIA

Read about a conversation that a 15-year-old named Shubhi had with her grandma as they were heading home from a departmental store.

Shubhi: If I hadn't been with you when you went grocery shopping, the shopkeeper might have insisted on additional money from you, and you might have ended up paying Rs. 500 more than what was written on the bill.

Grandmother: Thanks Shubhi. You are more educated than I am. As I cannot read English, I was unable to understand the amount written on the bills next to each item. I was never given the chance to go to school.

Shubhi (With mild surprise): Who stopped you from attending school?

Grandmother: Schools were not as easily accessible in our area back then as they are now. Only boys and girls from higher castes and income levels in the area attended school, and relatively few of them went on to college. We were also required to perform household duties.

Shubhi found it extremely difficult to believe that even schools were not available in the locality. She was highly interested in learning how educational situations changed over time and what were the factors behind the significant changes that occurred over several decades. A similar situation now exists in many areas of the nation, which is unacceptable.

In this lesson, you will learn about the condition of women during pre-independence period and how various laws and movements affected women's education both before and after independence.

**OUTCOMES****Notes**

After studying this lesson, learner:

- understands the evolution of education in India from 19th century onwards;
- describes the agencies that promoted women's education in pre-independent India with a focus on 19th and 20th centuries.
- explains the role of Christian Missionaries, social reformers, and educated intelligentsia in bringing girls' education to India.

9.1. EVOLUTION OF WOMEN'S EDUCATION IN INDIA FROM 19TH CENTURY ONWARDS

To understand the status of women in India, first we must understand the historical context. It is crucial to understand the role that women played during the medieval and later colonial periods.

9.1.1 Women's Education in British Period

Most women were uneducated during the pre-British era. Very few people (belonging to upper caste and higher income group) had access to education. Other castes had very little access to education whereas Brahmins had access to the Vedas and Upanishads. Traditional Paathshalas, Madrasas, Mosques, and Gurukulas were places of learning for young children. Along with courses like Sanskrit, Grammar, Arithmetic, Religion, and Philosophy, Religious education was imparted.

Education in India began to receive some attention during British control with the Charter Act of 1813 and was fully acknowledged in the Macaulay's Minute of 1835. However, women's access to education in Indian society still remained limited. Only after the East India Company enacted the "Wood's Dispatch," which contained the Educational Development Programme, in 1854 were women's employment and education given special attention, and the government took on the duty for ensuring that women were literate.

The Charter Act of 1813

One of the most significant pieces of legislation for the development of education in British India is the Charter Act of 1813. At this time, the East India Company also began investigating and taking initial moves toward accepting responsibility in education. Christian missionaries were able to serve in India and spread education because of this action. Literature promotion was encouraged by the Charter Act of 1813. It provided for the allocation of a sum of at least one lakh rupees annually for the restoration and advancement of literature. It supported the



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educated communities of India and strove to introduce and advance scientific knowledge among the inhabitants of the British colonies in India.

Macaulay minutes

Lord William Bentinck played a significant role in laying the foundations of multilingual colonial India. In contrast to Sanskrit or Arabic, which were then used in schools financed by the East India Company, he promoted the adoption of English as the language of instruction starting in the sixth grade. He argued that education should be made available to all and hence reducing the expense of education. Western education would also spread and trickle down to the masses at the same time. Lord William Bentinck introduced the policy of expanding Western education in India based on recommendations from the “Macaulay minutes.” He established the Elphinstone Institution of Bombay (1835 AD) and the Calcutta Medical College (1835 A.D.). In a statement made in 1844, Lord Harding underlined that the English knew that Indians would aspire to have government employment, which pushed Indians to pursue education in English.

Wood's Dispatch 1854

It was only in relation to a separate school for females that some advancement in women's education, notably at the primary level, was reported. Additionally, some women received training in preparation for employment as teachers at girls' schools. According to Wood's Dispatch's advice, women's education is essential to the advancement of society. It was always suggested that the government support women's education. “The importance of female education in India cannot be overstated; and we have seen with delight the evidence which is now shown of an increased willingness on the part of many of the locals of India to give their daughters a good education,” the Wood's Dispatch read. The Dispatch additionally urged private businesses to support girls' education. The institutions receiving grants-in-aid were to include the schools for girls. During this time, it was strongly advised to support primary education and vernaculars. Also observed were the establishment of three universities in Calcutta, Madras, and Bombay that were modelled after the London University.

It is important to analyse the slow but steady progress that girls' education made during the pre-independent period after taking into account some socioeconomic factors, such as the prevalence of the Purdah system and the discrimination of womenfolk, child marriage, sati, suppression after marriage, the lack of a divorce system, forced self-restraint for widows, and the Devadasi system.

During this time, several socio-religious organisations led by well-known figures like Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar emphasised the importance of women's education in India. To guarantee that women could access education, leaders of the lower castes in India, such Mahatma Jyotiba Phule and Periyar, took series of actions.

Education and
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In 1883, two Indian women became the first female graduates, marking the beginning of women attending colleges. The establishment of an Indian Women's University, presently known as Shrimati Nathibai Damodar Thackeray (SNDT) Women's University, in Bombay in 1916 is a turning point in the history of women's education in India from 1902 to 1922.

**ACTIVITY 9.1**

List out important legislations enacted during the British Period for women's education.

9.2.1 Role of different agencies for promotion of women's education in pre-independent India

Arya Samaj

The Arya Samaj was established in Lahore by Swami Dayananda Saraswati in 1871. Its membership increased quickly in the Northwest and the Punjab. He was extremely troubled by the miserable state in which Indian women were forced to live because of the effect of dowry and early marriage, and he understood that educating women would help to elevate their status. He used the examples of outstanding female Rishis like Gargi and Maitreyi to persuade people to promote female education. Swamiji established several Patashalas (schools) in Farrukabad, Kashi, Kasganj, and Challsan around the year 1870. Additionally, he started Meerut's Kanya Patashala, a girl's school.

Brahmo Samaj

The Brahmo Samaj was resuscitated with an increase in number of members from 3,851 in 1891 to 4,051 in 1901, especially in Bengal. They were highly educated and influential people, but their liberalism was starting to wane. The Prarthna Samaj was an organisation that developed in Bombay and is substantially comparable.



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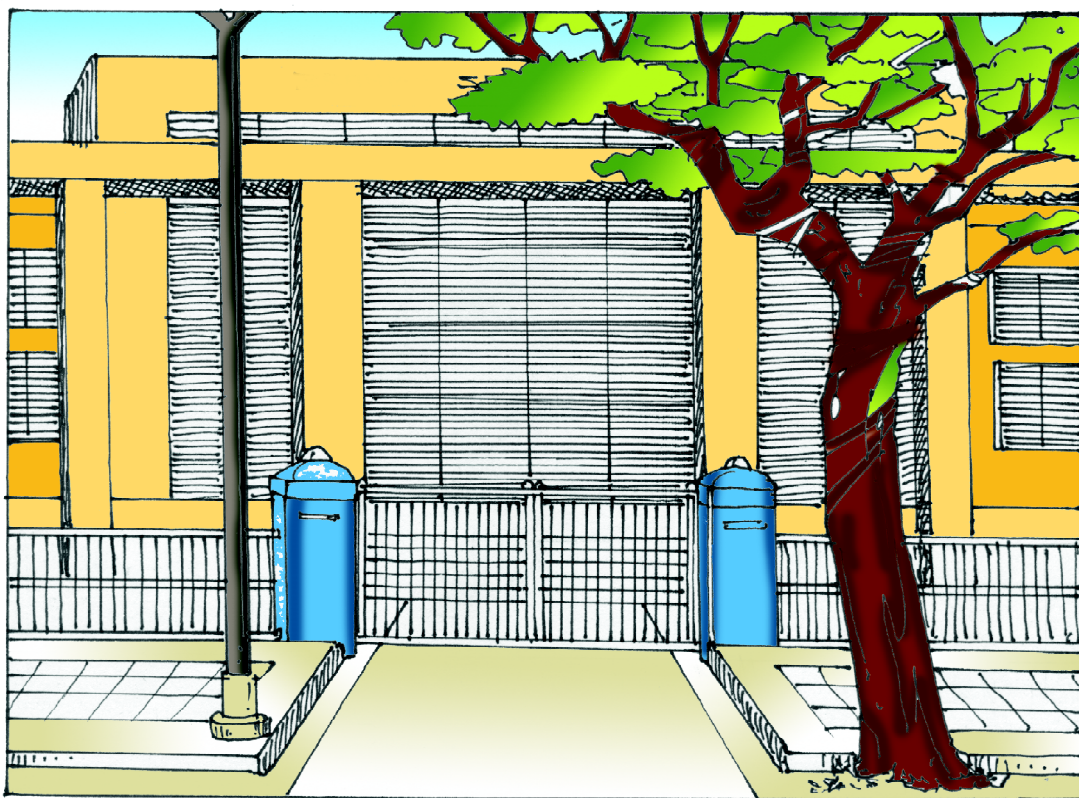


Fig:9.1 The Brahmo Samaj

All-India Women's Conference

A group of women's organizations under the All-India Women's Conference exerted significant pressure on the colonial authority to provide women with political and legal rights. In 1927, the first All-India Women's Conference was organized to highlight the importance of legal rights and address challenges in promoting education for women. Early marriage was denounced because it interfered with women's ability to pursue higher education. But education for women was primarily seen as enhancing their responsibilities. However, the All-India Women's Conference lacked a wide base of support since Hindu women from upper and middle class and caste backgrounds dominated. It failed to win the support of rural women or women from lower socioeconomic groups in its fight against the traditional Hindu rules and customs.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 9.1

1. Why is the Charter Act of 1813 considered as one of the most important legislations about educational development in British India?
2. What encouraged Indians to practice English Education during the British Period?
3. Why did Swami Dayanand Saraswati emphasize on the education of women?

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9.3 ROLE OF CHRISTIAN MISSIONARIES, SOCIAL REFORMERS AND EDUCATED INTELLIGENTSIA IN GIRLS' EDUCATION IN INDIA.

9.3.1 Role of Christian Missionaries

Early in the nineteenth century, public female education began to emerge, thanks to the missionaries' efforts. It also sparked the rise of a group of educated women, including doctors, teachers, social workers, and scholars. These groups of intellectuals further contributed largely to the promotion of the early women's movement. They pioneered printing, publishing, and journalism. They provided education to women, slaves, native Americans, those from lower castes, and the poor. Additionally, missionaries were in charge of pressuring the government into starting social changes.

Missionaries started their own educational institutions. The government also supported both financially and politically. Female missionaries made extra efforts to reach upper caste women through zenana (women's section of the house) visiting or house-to-house tutoring classes for women while the men were away at work, even though their family members forbade them due to the presence of male teachers and inspectors.

9.3.2 Social reformers and educated intelligentsia and girls' education in India

Men and women have fought alongside throughout the history of women's education society. Social reformers such as Jyotirao Phule, Rabindranath Tagore, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Swami Vivekananda, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, and others devoted their lives to improving the status of women in society. Since many reformers saw that numerous norms and traditions were impeding women from realising their full potential, the social reform movement began in India.

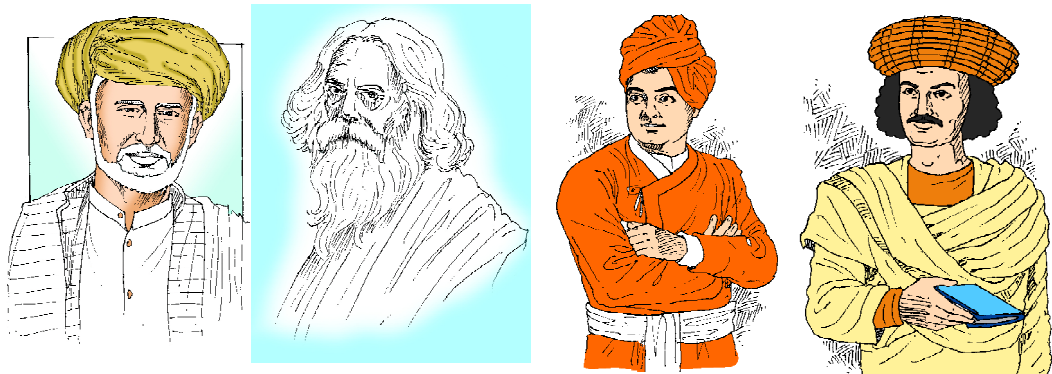


Fig 9.2. Indian Leaders Who Worked For Women's Education Before Independence



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Child marriage, Sati, the Purdah system, and other social evils were pervasive in many areas of India during the pre-independence era. Therefore, social reformers saw women's education as a way to liberate them from social evils and enhance their status. Women's socialisation and education were greatly aided by the work of the Arya Samaj and the Brahmo Samaj. The reformers opposed superstition, orthodoxy, and cruel traditions by utilising contemporary knowledge, science, the egalitarian and humanitarian teachings of Christianity, rationality, and liberalism.

Cultural revivalists and social reformers with liberal ideas had different views on women's education. Proponents of cultural revival saw women as the guardians of tradition and the family.

They believed that by preparing women to resist westernization, education could support traditional Indian culture and values. However, liberal social reformers believed that educating women would help them become wise partners for the emerging class of westernised upper caste men. They will also show themselves to be capable mothers for the following generation. In order to improve women's traditional duties within the patriarchal household, education for women was advocated.

9.3.2.1 Raja Ram Mohan Roy

Raja Ram Mohan Roy, a great social reformer, put laudable effort to transform Indian Society. The progressive ideologies of Raja Ram Mohan Roy also helped to improve Indian Education System. He was the main advocate of modern process of education and scientific thinking. He extensively studied Christianity and other religions. After that, he concluded that India needed to learn a lot because Hindu society is heavily impacted by superstitions. He believed that education was the only way to bring about societal change. The Brahmo Samaj, which he formed in 1828, was based on the ideals of his views about social and religious change. Together with David Hare, he also founded the Hindu College in 1817 with the aim of delivering an English-language education. Education at the college level also placed a strong emphasis on studying Western humanities and sciences.

He strongly supported the induction of western learning into Indian education. Additionally, he founded the Vedanta College to provide programs that combine Western and Indian knowledge. Ram Mohan Roy was adamantly opposed to the Sati tradition, which involves burning Hindu widows. He ran a campaign to increase public awareness and persuaded the British government to outlaw the practice. He concluded that educating women is crucial to putting an end to these evil social practices. Ram Mohan Roy pushed for the expansion and success of women's education. He highlighted repeatedly that society wouldn't be freed from vices without educated women.

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9.3.2.2. Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar

A leading figure in the Bengal Renaissance is Ishwar Chandra Bandhopadhyay, also known as Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar. The reform campaign initiated by Raja Ram Mohan Roy was maintained by him. In addition to being a well-known writer and thinker, Vidyasagar was also a devoted supporter of humanity. He brought about a transformation in Bengal's educational system.

One of Vidyasagar's main aims in his designs was to educate girls. He understood that emancipating and liberating women from the horrible load of injustice and inequality forced on them by the cruel society of the day was impossible unless they could receive education.

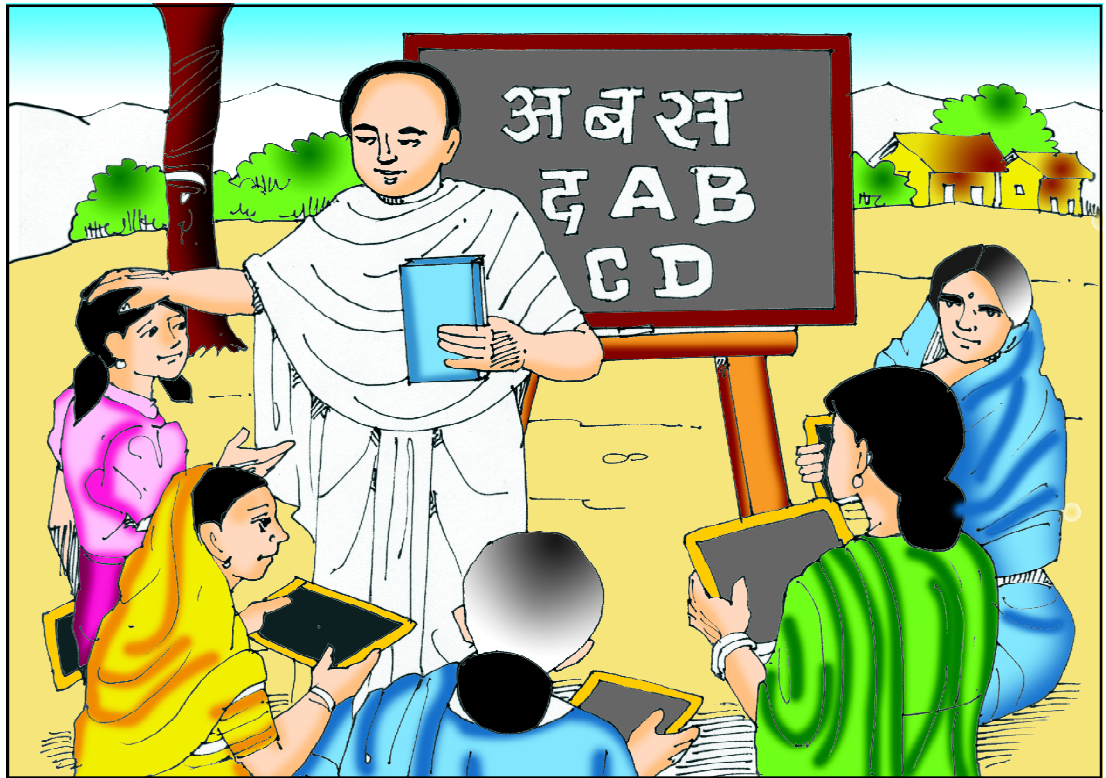


Figure 9.3: Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar

Conservatives in the society, however, were against girls' education. Vidyasagar had to refute these traditionalists with passages from Sanskrit scriptures that specifically ordered the rearing and care of daughters. The entire credit for elucidating the true significance of the Hindu shastras, which safeguard the right of women to education, and for disseminating this information among his fellow citizens, belongs to Vidyasagar. He used his literary talent to assist female education by writing books, pamphlets, and essays.

Vidyasagar made a vital contribution to the education of women by providing reports on the curriculum taught to females in schools, which included reading, writing, arithmetic, biography, and Bengali history, as well as reading passages on various topics, needlework, and sewing.



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He started 35 girls' schools in Bengal with 1300 girls enrolled. Additionally, he knocked on the doors to speak with parents, asking them to enroll their daughters in school and offering financial assistance to some of the institutions. He also encouraged the government to establish the "NARI SHIKSHA BHANDAR" fund to provide financial support for the education of girls and urged it to offer grant-in-aid benefits for the maintenance of girls' schools.

9.3.2.3 Mahatma Jyotiba Phule

Indian women's history is full of pioneers who overcame obstacles posed by gender and fought determinedly for their rights. Women today have achieved great success in a variety of fields, including politics, the arts, science, law, and others. Jyotirao Phule, husband of Savitribai Phule, had studied the Hindu scriptures and held the view that all humans were equal. He understood that the only means by which all people might be given with social equality was via education. According to him, being educated is a human right. Education for all was a priority for Mahatma Phule. The Indian Constitution's Article 45, which calls for the universalization of education, was sponsored by him. He also advocated for the education of women. He, therefore, began the process at home by educating Savitribai Phule, his wife. She continued to strive toward challenging and eliminating many societal ills after that. He made a concerted effort to lay the groundwork for education, particularly for women, and for all people, especially the underprivileged segments of society.

In order to accomplish his goals, he established a female school in Tatya Sahib Bhide's residence at Budhwar Peth in 1848. In 1851, he established two new schools, one of which was for girls from lower socioeconomic strata. He published numerous books and used them to promote his revolutionary ideas and educate the public about their rights.

9.3.2.4. Mahatma Gandhi

Gandhi understood that several societal practices, including early marriage, dowry, purdah, and others, had devalued the status of women in society. He argued that getting rid of it will lead to gender equality in the political, social, educational, and legal arenas. He believed that women should be educated since doing so would assure their moral development and enable them to compete on an equal footing with men. Gandhi encouraged female participation in politics and the nationalist cause, but he also recognised the importance of a woman's position as a wife and mother in the household. To better fulfil their traditional duties as wives and mothers in the patriarchal household, he argued that women must receive education.

**Notes****DO YOU KNOW?**

The term “universalization of education” refers to the acceptance and provision of educational opportunities to all people, regardless of race, religion, sex, or physical or disability. The concept which was advocated by Mahatma Phule during his time is yet to be achieved.

9.3.2.5. Sir Syed Ahmed Khan

A renowned scholar, Sir Syed Ahmed Khan began his professional life working for the colonial government as a civil servant. He attempted to implement educational reforms after realising that the rigidity of an orthodox worldview harmed the future of Muslims. Despite his deep affection for Urdu and his significant contributions to its growth and enrichment, he sought to adopt English as the medium of education as a corrective remedy.

In 1869–1870, Syed Ahmad Khan travelled to England to carry out research into the country's administrative and educational systems. Sir Syed began advocating for a new intellectual leadership based on contemporary and western scientific understanding. He organised Muslim business people and founded contemporary schools and newspapers to promote an educated understanding of Islam. Sir Syed took on the responsibility of establishing an institution with the same goals. At Aligarh, M.A.O. College was founded in 1877. With the intention of fostering the social, scientific, and economic development of Indian Muslims, it later evolved into the well-known Aligarh Muslim University.

The All-India Muslim Educational Conference was founded in 1886 by Sir Syed Ahmad Khan with the intention of bringing about social and educational change. The program's key goals included encouraging Indian Muslims to pursue western education, enhancing the Urdu language by translating significant scientific literature, and supporting women's education as “necessary for the balanced intellectual development of future generations.” In order for Muslim society to develop as a whole, Sir Syed Ahmad Khan underlined the importance of contemporary education for girls and pleaded with the Aligarh University student body to acknowledge this.

9.3.2.6 Swami Vivekananda

One of the most influential religious figures who emphasised the value of social reform and women's education was Swami Vivekananda. If women in our nation receive the appropriate education, he thought they will be able to handle their own difficulties in their own way. His plan for educating women aimed to instill in them a sense of strength, bravery, and respect for their chastity and dignity. He highlighted that daughter should receive the same assistance and attention in their upbringing and education as sons. He advocated for the inclusion of disciplines like sewing, nursing, home science, culinary arts, etc. that weren't covered in the curriculum at



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the time. According to Swami Vivekananda, the degeneration of India can be largely attributed to the lack of female education, which must be promoted.

9.3.2.7. Pandita Ramabai

One of India's well-known leaders in the fight for women's rights and independence was Pandita Ramabai. She made it her life's work to improve the lives of women, particularly widows, abandoned, and downtrodden ones. She founded Arya Mahila Samaj in 1882 to promote women's education in Pune and other areas of Western India. This led to the formation of the Sharada Sadan in 1889.

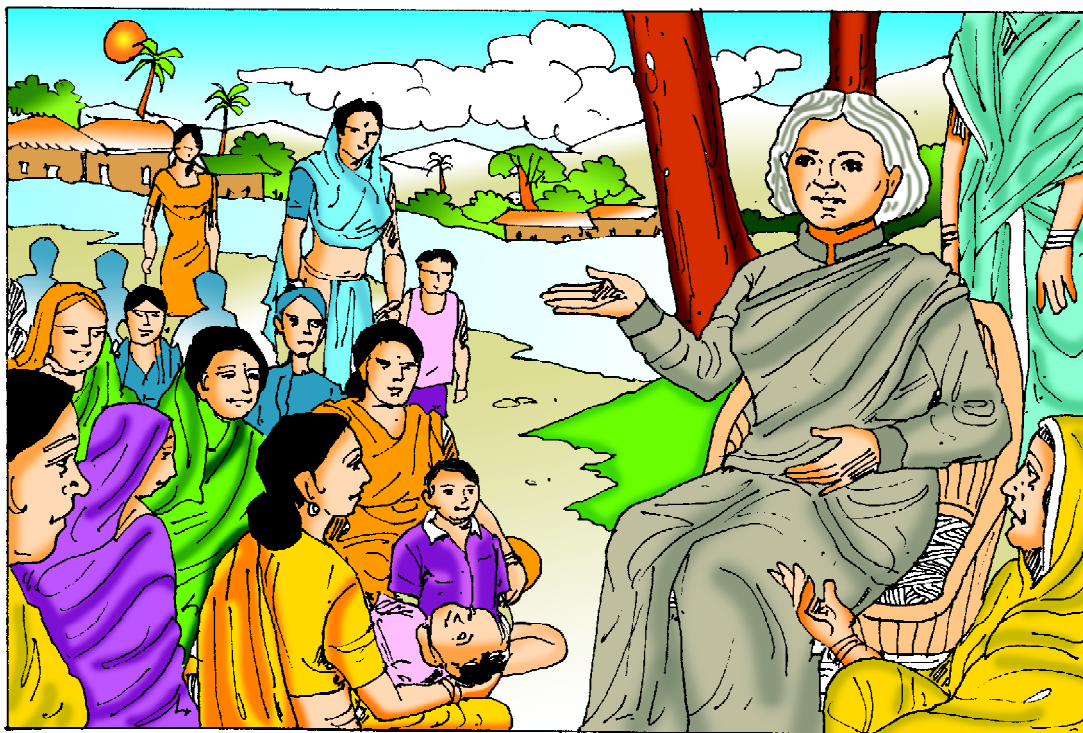


Fig. 9.4 Sharda Sadan (Home for Learning) was established by Pandit Ramabai in Chowpatty, an area of Mumbai (Which was then under the British Raj, known as Bombay).

She was consulted by a commission appointed by the Government of India in 1882 to look into education. She advocated for the training of teachers and the appointment of female school inspectors. She also stated that Indian women should be accepted to medical colleges since the situations of Indian women were such that women could only treat them medically. The proof provided by Ramabai reached Queen Victoria and caused a huge stir. Later, Lady Dufferin launched the Women's Medical Movement because of it. In 1898, she founded a mission in Khedgaon, close to Pune, where widows and underprivileged women were taught a range of skills, including carpentry and how to operate a printing press.

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She was the first Muslim woman to teach in India, and she worked at the Phule couple's school, where she taught Dalit children. She assisted Savitribai Phule in establishing the first institution of higher caste Hindus and Orthodox Muslims, the "Indigenous Library," in her own home. Additionally, she used to spend hours counseling parents of girls who were not attending school.

Sheetal reshapes her own destiny and of her family: A case study

Since childhood, Sheetal was fascinated to wear the school uniform and go to school. Many times, she asked her parents to send her to school but they never agreed as they were illiterate, so were not aware of the value of education. She looked after her young brother Rohan while her parents went to work. One day her mother Anita came to know that children get food in the school, so she started sending her children to a nearby government school. Sheetal was very intelligent and did well in academics. She passed her senior secondary level with very good marks, but her parents were not ready to send her to college which was far from her village. Her teacher convinced her parents to send Sheetal to college in a nearby village. After completing her graduation, Sheetal joined as a teacher in the same government school she studied from.

Now her parents do not work as laborers, her younger brother works in a private Multinational company and she got married to a man working in Bank and has two daughters. One of her daughters wants to become a pilot and the other wants to be a doctor. Seeing the success of Sheetal, many parents have started sending their daughters to school. Sheetal goes door-to-door to convince parents who still are not sending their children to school.

**ACTIVITY 9.2**

Make a list of important personalities who have contributed to Women's education in India apart from the above-mentioned personalities.

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 9.2**

1. List out the evil social practices that prevented women to realize their full potential in pre-independence India?
2. What was the main objective of the formation of the All-India Muslim Educational Conference?
3. What was the essence of the educational philosophy of Mahatma Jyotiba Phule?

*Notes***WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNT**

- In the pre-British period, most of the people and majority of women were illiterate. Only a very small number of people got the opportunity for education. In India, education was controlled by upper castes. School Education was imparted in traditional Paathshalas, Madrasas, Mosques and Gurukulas.
- Although the Charter Act of 1813 and the renowned Macaulay's Minute of 1835 gave education in India some attention under British rule, it wasn't until the East India Company's "Wood's Dispatch," which contained an educational development programme, was passed in 1854 that special attention was paid to women's education and employment, and the government took on direct responsibility for ensuring that women were literate.
- Socio religious movements led by eminent persons like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar emphasized on women's education in India. They realized that various customs and traditions were preventing women to realize their full potential. Leaders of the lower castes in India, such as Mahatma Jyotiba Phule and Periyar, undertook several steps to ensure that women could access education.
- Various Committees and Commissions in Independence India including The National Committee on Women's Education (1958-1959), appointed by the Government of India, The Committee on Differentiation of Curricula for Boys and Girls (1964), Education Commission (1964-66) and National Policy on Education (1986), revised in 1992 and New Education Policy 2020 have consistently strived to eliminate gender stereotyping from curriculum and also in educational development of girls/women.

**TERMINAL EXERCISE**

1. Describe the important recommendations of Wood's Dispatch about Educational Development in India?
2. Do you think that All-India Women's Conference has any role in promoting education for Women? Justify.
3. Assess the role of the Arya Samaj in improving Women's education in Colonial India.
4. Explain the steps taken by Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar for women's education and emancipation?
5. Mahatma Gandhi emphasized on Women's Education. Justify this statement with suitable examples?

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6. "Pandita Ramabai was one of the renowned champions of women's education and emancipation in India". Justify the above statement with suitable arguments.
7. There is difference between Curriculum advocated for Gender Equality before and after independence? Explain.

GLOSSARY

Patriarchy: Male domination or authoritative and absolute rule by the male head of the family.

Sati: The practice of self or forced immolation of a widow on the funeral pyre of her husband.

Missionaries: A group of people sent to a foreign country to teach their religion to the people.

Subjugation: The domination and sub-ordination of women by men.

**ANSWERS TO INTEXT QUESTIONS****9.1**

1. For the first time, the East India Company started taking interest and moving towards taking responsibility in the area of education. Christian missionaries were able to serve in India and spread education as a result of this action. The Charter Act of 1913 also provided encouragement for the promotion of Literature.
2. The All India Women's Conference has played an important role because it emphasized that the English knowing Indians would get Government jobs.
3. Swami Dayanand Saraswati was deeply disturbed by the sad plight of Indian women due to the influence of Dowry and early marriage.

9.2

1. Child Marriage, Sati, Purdah System.
2. The All-India Muslim Education Conference's primary goals were to advance western education among Indian Muslims and to enrich the Urdu language through the translation of significant scientific publications and advocating education for women "as essential for the balanced intellectual development of future generations."
3. To be educated is a human right.