

Chapter V

SOCIAL REFORM AND WOMEN EDUCATION AMONG LEWA AND KADWA PATIDARS OF BARODA STATE

This chapter seeks to trace the history of social reform and women education among lewa and kadwa patidars of Baroda State. The first part deals with the history of social reform in Baroda State, discussed in the context of social reform measures of patidars adopted generally in the region. This itself is embedded in the reformation drive of the colonial Government through legislation against evil social customs and spread of formal education to the masses. The heroic efforts of local reformers such as Bechhardas Laskari of Ahmedabad to stop the practice of female infanticide get a place of eminence in the history of social reform among the Patidars. This section also takes up several measures adopted to abolish excessive marriage expenses of Patidars by the collector of Ahmedabad; efforts of Jodavar Singh in Patdi and Bechharbhai Raijibhai in Ganpatpura (both in the Gaekwad State), the role of press and caste associations to reform patidar society, etc. In addition, census reports on changes noticed among Patidar females are also narrated in this chapter. The second section deals with the history of educational developments among the Patidar females.

IV-1: History of Social Reform among Patidars in Baroda State

Among the social reformers of Baroda State who tried to reform the Patidar society the names of Chhaganbhai, Bechharbhai Rajibhai, Jodavar Singh of Patdi, Govindbhai Hathibhai Desai, Rao Bahadur Trimbakrao Varajrai, Sheth Jivbhai Ked Das, Turjabhai Purushottamdas, Shree Ramchandra Jamnadas Amin, Nandubhai Mancharam of Patdi Darbar, Vasudev Gopal Bhandarkar, Hargovind Das Kantawala, Chhaganlal Joshi, Motibhai Amin, Vitthalbhai Patel, Kumudji kalyan Mehta, Bhogilal Patel, etc. are remembered with reverence by the community elders. Most of them belonged to the Patidar community. They realized about the backwardness of their community and the need for progress. Through concerted efforts and mobilizing public opinion they tried to remedy the wrong social practices widely prevalent in the Patidar community at that time, viz. incurring very heavy expenses at wedding of daughters, selling of girls, exchange marriage, female infanticide, restrictions on remarriage of widows, holding collective wedding only once every ten or eleven years, child-marriage, and polygamy.

IV.1.1:- Measures to abolish the practice of female infanticide

The most dreadful custom among Patidars, especially among the lewas, was the practice of female infanticide, i.e., killing of newborn female infants soon after birth so as to set free the parents from the burden of paying exorbitant dowry at her marriage in future. In the lewas marriage custom had come to involve such a high expenditure for the relation of the bride that birth of a daughter was universally regarded as a curse for the family. The custom known as '*dudh peeti*' (making the baby drink milk) involved killing of innocent girl babies through suffocation by plunging them into a pot of milk, immediately after birth.

In Gujarat, the first traces of female infanticide among the Kanbis were brought to light in 1839 by Mr. Hutt, the Judicial Commissioner of Ahmedabad, who was dealing with cases of murder crime. On probing he found that female infanticide was widely prevalent among the Kanbis inhabiting Ahmedabad and its surrounding region.

Administrative concern about the private lives of the Kanbis was first expressed in 1848 when the Kheda Collector observed a 'depression in the affairs' of the community, which he attributed, in part, to their ruinous marriage expenses.¹ Though considered the thriftiest, hardworking and

¹ *Selections from the Records of the Bombay Government* (SRBG), p. 33.

reliable section of the agrarian population the kanbis were notorious for their extravagance during weddings. Discussions on their private affairs involved ways of cutting down on this expense rather than on infanticide. This discussion began by analyzing the leva kanbi marriage system. It was observed that the leva kanbis had a hierarchy, of which the patidars of the Charotar (which included Anand, Nadiad and Borsad) were the most superior. These aristocrats were called '*kulia*', i.e. 'of good family'. The other Kanbis competed for their alliance by offering the gift of a daughter with dowry (or a hypergamous marriage). The outsiders were called '*akulia*', of no prestigious family. Enormous and ever-increasing dowries were asked for and received by the *kulia*.² The rising level of marriage expenses was said to be the reason for the Kanbis being more prosperous than they were.

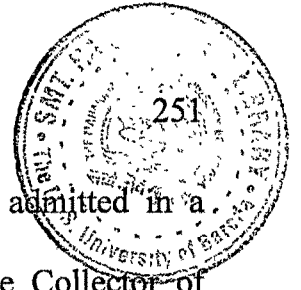
It was immediately apparent that the concern of the administrators in this case was more pragmatic than humanitarian from the outset. They did not wish to see '*akulia*' families ruined, as they feared this would create problems in collecting revenue. Revenue difficulties in Kheda persisted

² Ibid., pp. 34-35.

throughout the 1830s, 1840s and 1850s.³ The marriage practices of the kanbis came under scrutiny precisely because they seemed to affect the fortunes of the revenue administration. Therefore, the local revenue administrators arrange with the kanbis for the creation of smaller marriage circles and the disavowal of the ambition to many into *kulia* families. The idea became popular among the kanbis themselves. By the time of the 1873 report, most of the Kanbi villages were grouped into supposedly non-hierarchical marriage circles called '*ekdas*', based on an exchange of brides rather than hypergamy. Yet a legal agreement forbidding hypergamy into the aristocratic villages was not passed in the Ahmedabad court in 1852. The Court of Directors agreed that it was improper to sanction a rule that one section of a caste could not marry another section.

The fact that local administrators were piqued with this judicial ruling shows how far their meddling had actually proceeded, and how much store they set by interfering with the internal affairs of a caste when they thought it pertinent. When infanticide among the kanbis was discovered, however, the impetus for meddling to curb it was now missing. Instead, emphasis continued to be placed on marriage practices and reforming them.

³ *Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency*, Vol. III, Kaira and Panch Mahals, Bombay, 1879 pp. 104-8. The account that follows is based on SRBG NS 147, pp. 13-27, H.R. Cooke's compilation report, and pp. 33-52, Cooke's special report on Kaira.



That infanticide existed among the leva kanbis was admitted in a petition which a group of kanbis submitted in 1855 to the Collector of Kheda. Thus, administrators' suspicions were not founded on direct inquiry, but on the initiative of certain reform minded kanbis who sought the governments' intervention. In order to collect data regarding the proportion of men and women the Government conducted a census of the Kanbi population in 1848. This was the first systematic measure to know how far the evil practice of female infanticide prevailed. The first census conducted in 1848 under the supervision of Mr. Fawcett, the Collector and magistrate of Ahmedabad showed far fewer females as compared to males in the community and a marked disproportion between the birth and death rates of the boys versus girls.⁴ Data from the census conducted on 1st January 1849 highlight these aspects in respect of the population of the Kheda district (Table – 9).

⁴ John Wilson, *The History of the Suppression of Infanticide in Western India*, Bombay, 1855, p. 421.

Table – 9.**Census of Kanbi Population in Kaira District in 1849**

Taluka	Males	Females	Total	Ratio of Males to Females (%)
Muhoondo	10704	7471	18175	70
Matur	8519	7921	16440	93
Neriad	18596	13278	31874	71
Thasra	6721	4573	11294	68
Borsad	12347	8772	21119	71
Napur	11433	7462	18895	65
Kuppurwunj	3150	2226	5376	71
Total	71470	51703	123173	72

Source: Kheda Magistrate's Office, 23rd Feb. 1849

Following this, numerous reports were written and considerable attention was devoted to the problem.⁵ In an 1857 dispatch the Court of Directors announced that the infanticide did exist to a considerable extent among the leva kanbis. Their conclusion was that the most effective way to prevent it was through the reduction of marriage expenses.

The overall sex ratio among the Kanbis in Kheda district, based on this census, was 72 to 100; the talukas that later became Nadiad, Anand and Borsad had the lower ratios of 70, 65 and 71. The Rev John Wilson, a humanitarian who wrote the first published account of the attempts to suppress infanticide in western India, was convinced that these figures indicated the prevalence of infanticide, and the exhorted the government to

⁵ SRBG NS 147 p. 36. Four important reports from local officers are summarized here not republished in full They are dated 1855, 1856, 1857 and 1863.

take firm action, particularly because, for the first time, infanticide was seen to exist in a part of Gujarat under direct British rule.⁶

Mr. Webb the Collector and Magistrate of Kheda was surprised to find that though the actual census figures showed a marked disproportion between the two sexes, the people flatly refused the existence of this practice. Identifying such crime was difficult because infanticide was secretly practiced and could be easily concealed. Above all, it was extremely difficult to decide whether the infant died a natural death or was deliberately killed. It was commonly acknowledged that the root causes of female infanticide were the excessive dowry system and the hypergamous marriage system. Mr. Webb and other officials in Kheda district took a binding from the kanbis for the reduction of the marriage expenses.⁷

Mr. Fawcett had been successful in getting the heads of the caste to enter into voluntary agreements to diminish their marriage expenses. According to these agreements, the expenses were to be reduced in some instances from Rupees 3,800 to about Rupees 700. Mr. Fawcett feared that

⁶ Ibid, p. 424.

⁷ Makrand Mehta, "A Study of the practice of Female Infanticide among the Kanbis of Gujarat", *Journal of Gujarat Research Society*, 1966, Nos. 1-4/109-112

the custom of infanticide extended to the adjoining territories of the Gaekwad and even the city of Ahmedabad itself.⁸

Mr. Webb, with the assistance of the Munsif of Nadiad, himself a kanbi, brought the principal kanbis of the districts of his charge under engagements for the reduction of marriage expenses, similar to those in the neighboring districts of the Gaekwad (i.e. Baroda) and the Nawab of Cambay to follow this example.⁹

When the Government of India passed Act VIII of 1870 for the preservation of female infants, the Bombay Government hesitated to apply this regulation to the Bombay Presidency. This was certainly a mistaken policy on the part of the Bombay Government. However, after receiving petitions from the kadwa kanbis to apply the Act VIII of 1870 to their caste, Mr. Borrodaile requested the Central Government to extend some of the provisions of the Act VIII of 1870, for the prevention of murder of female infants,¹⁰ and ultimately in April 1871, the provisions of the Infanticide Act were applied both to the lewa and kadwa kanbis.¹¹

In this task Barrodaile secured valuable assistance from a wealthy Ahmedabad Philanthropist and social reformer of the kadwa group,

⁸ John Wilson, op. cit., pp 421-422.

⁹ Ibid, p. 119

¹⁰ Makrand Mehta, op. cit., pp. 63-64.

¹¹ M. N. Srinivas, "Prospects of Sociological Research in Gujarat", *Journal of M. S. University of Baroda*, Vol. II, No. 1, Baroda, 1953, p. 30.

Bechhardas Ambaidas Laskari. Mr. Fawcett described him as a person of great energy and tact who entered this subject with great zeal.¹² He tried hard to extend the Act VIII of 1870 to Gujarat. He took a petition signed by thousands of kanbis to represent them to the Government. He went to Puna in August 1870 to meet Simon Fitzgerald, the Governor of Bombay. He proved successful in persuading the Governor to extend this Act to Gujarat.¹³

The District Magistrate of Ahmedabad supported the petition with census figures from the Revenue Survey of both Ahmedabad and Kheda districts. The census data showed a very high difference between the sexes in Nadiad and Borsad talukas (where the kanbis were almost exclusively levas). At this time, the Nadiad kanbis had a ratio of 69 to 100 and the Borsad Kanbis 66 to 100. The Revenue Commissioner of the Northern Division, convinced that the figures pointed to infanticide, replied that the Act should be applied to the kanbis at once, and notification of its application to both the kadvas and levas of Ahmedabad and Kheda was published almost immediately. The next day, the levas of Nadiad and the Collector of Kheda protested at the sudden introduction of the Act to Kheda

¹² *Mumbai State Achieves, Political Department*, Vol. 4 of 1848, p. 240. Also see Makrand Mehta, op. cit., p. 64.

¹³ Makrand Mehta, op. cit., 64.

district without any prior consultation. The government replied that rules, once declared, had to be followed.

The application of this Act to the kanbis proved a great blessing to them for it gave a legal sanction to some of the useful measures which the kanbis had adopted for the reduction of the marriage expenses. They were now required to register the births and deaths of the female infants in the Office of the Registrar. Any case of doubtful death was minutely investigated and the guilty was severely punished. On 18th Feb. 1889, the kanbis from Patdi, Viramgam, Kadi, Bhal and Kanam held a meeting at Patdi and passed many resolutions to reduce marriage expense and such other matter¹⁴ which we will discuss afterwards in this chapter.

When the rules were examined, the reasons for the opposition to them were not immediately obvious. They called for (a) compulsory registration of all births, deaths, betrothals, marriages and remarriages in the communities designated, by government appointed registrars; (b) fees for every registration, and penalties for every breach of rules, constituting an Infanticide Fund; (c) inspection of the bodies of female children before burial or cremation; and (d) a limit on the expenses incurred by the contracting party on marriage. What it principally involved was that when a

¹⁴ Ibid, p. 64.

child was born, the father or another relative had to go to the registrar to announce its birth and pay the registration fee. If the baby was declared dead and the body examined, however, it was doubtful if anything amiss would have been discovered, as the most popular method of infanticide was simply not to feed the newborn infant from the start. Thus the rules did not push inspection, suspicion, and interference far enough to prevent this form of infanticide. All they did was to designate the community as being under suspicion, keep records, and charge fees, all of which was, naturally, resented.¹⁵

When the lewas first protested, the government replied that there would be no modification until the censuses showed some improvement. However, nothing more stringent was ever done. Almost immediately protests began to be heard that female infanticide did not, in fact exist among the Lewas. The Revenue Commissioner in 1872, Alexander Rogers, wrote that he believed 'that there is a good deal of clap-trap in the whole of this out cry about the prevalence of female infanticide in this caste, and it had mostly been got up by a few interested individuals'.

The Government of India now began to reconsider the matter. In September 1872 the Collectors of Ahmedabad and Kheda were requested to

¹⁵ Alice Clark, "Limitations on female life chances in rural central Gujarat", *IESHR* Vol. XX, No. 1, p.5

report on the working of the Act, to submit returns on the Kanbi child population of every village, to indicate how many females were betrothed (the number with dowry and the number with bride price) and to report on their recommendations for the Act's continuation. The result included Cooke's lengthy report on Kheda, with statistical returns that clearly showed an extreme disproportion between the sexes, particularly in the most aristocratic villages and in those on the next level of prestige. Yet, in its text, this report denied the existence of female infanticide and recommended the relaxation of the Act. The statistics were acknowledged, yet marriage reforms were considered to be ending the problem. Further, even in the villages with the worst disproportion between the sexes, it was argued that 'even in these the discrepancy was not so great under a year old'.

By strict definition, infanticide was not the only cause of female infant and child mortality. Precisely because the sex ratio was worse between the ages of one and twelve than it was under one year, the proof of the prevalence of infanticide seemed to be confounded by the statistics (although there remained a district disproportion under one year of age). The report admitted that childhood mortality was caused by neglect of female children, but proposed no measures to remedy this condition. Clearly

indicated was the conclusion that the government was not concerned about such neglect and the mortality that accompanied it.

Cooke's chief concern in his extensive report was to argue conclusively that female infanticide could no longer be said to exist. There were various reasons for reaching this conclusion. One was that the levanbis lived in British Gujarat under direct British administration, and he felt that the validity of police protection had to be upheld. Another was that the Kanbis were protesting against stigmatisation clearly connoting a crime. The third was that criminality was something the Government had become increasingly conservative in assigning. Once infanticide had been defined as a crime in the Act of 1870, it took on a very narrow connotation all over northern India where that Act was being put into effect – a village or region could only be designated under the Act once its guilt had been proved, and the standard of evidence adopted was limited to a minimum sex ratio of 54 to 100.¹⁶ This was a far lower ratio than that which had convinced the local officers in the 1850s that the practice existed right in the heart of British Central Gujarat.

In making his point that infanticide could no longer exist, Cooke elucidated the mechanics of the hypergamous marriage practices of the

¹⁶ SRBG NS 147, op. cit., p. 22, fn.

Kanbis in intricate detail. Tables accompanied his report showing which villages belonged newly created marriage circles with equal ranking and the ones which had adopted even narrower exchange arrangements between either two or three villages. The listing and enumeration of *ekdas* given provides interesting source material at the local level, and anthropologists David Pocock has used this to present a study of a single *ekda* of seven villages in his book, *Kanbi and Patidar*.¹⁷ These new arrangements were hailed as internal reform; and indeed they did reflect a great deal of organizing activity within the community which, in itself, had social and historical significance.¹⁸ Cooke made his claim by referring to a tendency which seemed to counter any need among the kanbis to practice female infanticide, which was the practice of paying bride price among lower ranking kanbis. Infanticide was supposed to exist only when a family faced the necessity of giving dowry with a daughter – if they could alternatively receive bride price, why should they not let her live ? Cooke even argued that now there was a shortage of females and demand was so high, there was a premium on their survival. Thus the sex ratio was submerged in

¹⁷ David, Pocock, *Kanbi and Patidar, A Study of the Patidar Community of Gujarat*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1972.

¹⁸ SRBG NS 147, op. cit., p. 53-95, Cook, in his report, stated that of the children under 12, the most aristocratic lewa kanbi villages had very low ratios, between 39 and 53 girls to every 100 boys (p. 25). The ratio of kanbi child population of Hristyone high ranking villages were between 55 and 65 (pp. 49-50). The taluka all ages ratios for kanbis, based on Cooke's tables, were Naidad 77, Anand 71 and Borsad 50 (p. 54).

rationalizations. As a result of his recommendations, the Act was relaxed in 1872 to a mere system of record keeping, without fees or sanctions.

The issue was again revived in British Gujarat in 1888 by Mr. G. F. Shepherd, Commissioner, Northern Division. Under the suspicion that extravagant marriage expenditure might lead to the destruction of female life in the lewa kanbi caste, rules restricting expenditure at marriage were applied to the 13 '*kulia*', i.e., aristocratic lewa kanbi villages of Charotar. The rules framed by the State for the reduction of marriage expenditure among the *kulia* kanbis, in conjunction with the Bombay Government, were still in force. By putting a stop to the ruinous extravagance which characterised the weddings of the caste these rules had removed one of the principal causes of female infanticide. Other factors that contributed significantly to a decline in female infanticide included the spread of modern education, and difficulty in securing brides experienced for quite sometime by the *kulia* patidars for their sons following a split within the community, separating five villages, viz. Naz and Pij under Baroda and Uttarsanda, Sunav and Ode under British territory, from the rest. The '*ekdas*' or solemn agreements, passed by the lewas of non-*kulia* villages bound them not to give their daughters in marriage to the *kulias*. The result was that the sons of the *kulias* who had been offered girls when they were infants remained

bachelors even when they were over 20 years old.¹⁹ The measures undertaken by Sheppard are described in the next point.

IV.1.2:- Measures to Abolish Excessive Wedding Expenses among the Lewas

The Commissioner of Northern Division, G. F. Sheppard was keen to regularize the marriage and funeral expenses among the lewa patidars. Towards the close of the year 1887 he attended a meeting of headman at Nadiad. In his address he was careful to explain that Government interference could not be expected. Many Baroda villages were represented by Rao Bahadur Trimbakrai Varajrai, Subha of Baroda. Who was much respected and trusted by the caste. Rao Bahadur and Sheppard thereafter prepared a set of rules and placed them before a general meeting held at Sheppard Camp, Dakor in February 1888. Large number of Lewas from 250 villages (167 from British Gujarat, 87 from Baroda State, and 2 from Cambay) including a considerable number from the 13 '*Kulia*' villages were present in the meeting.²⁰

The rules framed were as given below:

- I. The 'Parthan' or dowry paid by the father or guardian of the bride shall not be more than from Re. 1 to Rs. 251. This should include-

¹⁹ Srinivas, op. cit., p. 30.

²⁰ *Baroda State Archieve*, General Daftar, No. 394, Section 259, File 1, p. 2-3.

(1) The 'Chandla' acceptance of which signifies completion of the betrothal.

(2) The deposit on behalf of the bride, but shall not include payments on account of 'Abab'.

II. These (abab) payments shall be restricted as follows:

Re. 1 to Rs. 14-8-0 by the father of the bride and Re. 1 to Rs. 30-8-0 by the father of the bridegroom.

III. The "Jan" or marriage party and expenses thereof shall be restricted to the following:

The said party shall not exceed 100 persons and two carriages and not more than 3 dinners and 2 morning meals shall be provided. The allowance of grain for horses and bullocks shall not exceed Rs. 10 for each of the former and Rs. 7½ for each of the latter.

Only sons-in-law shall be entitled to gifts on this occasion and such gifts shall not exceed Rs. 2 by each person.

IV. The cost of marriage feast to the members of the bride's family shall not exceed Rs. 125.

V. On the occasion of the first visit of the bride to her husband's house, the expenditure was restricted as follows:

(1) Re. 1 to Rs. 11 on account of 'Kothala'.

(2) Re. 1 to Rs. 3 as 'Dakshina' to the bride's attendants.

(3) Not exceeding Rs. 3 for oil, spices, and supari for use of the bride.

(4) On the occasion of the second visit of the bride to her husband's house, presents may be sent not exceeding Rs. 3 in value and the 'Dakshina' to the bride's attendants shall not exceed Rs. 180.

VI. In the occasion of the first visit to the bride's house the presents or 'Bhalla' to be as follows:

To the bridegroom from Re. 1 to Rs. 15.

To the bridegroom's father, mother, sister, grandfather and grandmother from Re. 1 to Rs. 5.

VII. In the marriage of the bride's first daughter, the expenditure shall not exceed Re. 1 to Rs. 75 for 'Inameru'.

Re. 1 to Rs. 25 for 'Bhuda' and 'Panetur'. And not more than Rs. 10 on all accounts on the marriage of any other child.

VIII On the occasion of death of the bridegroom's father, mother, grandfather or grandmother or of the bride's father or mother the claims on the bride's family shall be limited to Rs. 1 to 11 on account of both 'Pagri shela' and 'Baras' and Re. 1 for 'Kogla'.

IX On the occasion of the bridegroom's death the amount to be expended for 'Palh' and 'Bhhabdi' shall not exceed Rs. 2 and 3, respectively.

- X On account of 'Bhilhi' the expenditure should not exceed Rs. 1 to each individual or Rs. 75 in all.
- XI Nothing in the above rules shall present the acceptances of customary presents of sweetmeats etc. on the usual occasions or of such assistance or allowance as the bride's father may wish to give or make when his daughter and her husband setup house for themselves, provided that such gifts shall not be claimable under any pretext and they shall not be applied for the use or benefit of the bridegroom's father.
- XII No girls shall be given in marriage to any lewa family belonging to any of the 13 notoriously prestigious villages namely Nadiad, Karamsad, Uttersunda, Borsad, Sunav, Alindra (in Kheda district); Vaso, Sojitra, Sayli, Bhadran, Dharmaj, Palej, Nar and Tarapur (under Baroda) except on terms of reciprocity, i.e. unless a girl from that family was given in return.²¹

The rules were accepted unanimously and it was proposed that they should be signed by all present. The *kulia*, however, though willing to admit the necessity for reform declined to pledge themselves by any formal

²¹ Ibid, pp. 17-22.

recognition of the new rules.²² At the afternoon meeting no lewas from the 13 village were present except a few of the reform supporters. Notwithstanding, the vast majority present there, consisting of 7000 persons, unanimously voted in favour of an application to the Government for legalization of the rules under the Act.²³ The real wishes of the caste were expressed when 30,683 persons endorsed the application with their signature. It was an overwhelming consensus of opinion, almost approaching absolute unanimity. But even this majority was exceeded in the Baroda villages, where as reported by the Sar-Subha, 92 percent were found to be in favour of the proposed reform.²⁴

The rules were sanctioned by the Government of India and were introduced effective from the 1st Feb. 1888. Reportedly they were well received everywhere and in the new marriages the outward expenditure was scrupulously regulated by the new scale.

The lewa example was finding its way to similar movements among the Khedawals of Kheda, the anavil brahmins of Surat, and the kadwa kanbis of Ahmedabad.

²² Ibid, p. 69.

²³ Ibid, p. 69.

²⁴ Ibid, p. 69.

The immediate effect of these rules was that '*ekda*' system was strengthened in Ahmedabad and in Kheda district. It was realized that the practice of hypergamy led to a competition between the '*akulias*' to marry their daughters into the aristocratic villages which was the root cause of their ruinous expenditure on dowries. Therefore, to discourage such alliances *akulia* villages of equal social status formed groups or units under solemn agreement or '*ekdas*' with the purpose of restricting matrimonial alliances exclusively within the group, leading to endogamy. This could be considered a significant step towards reform of marriage customs and during the few years following the introduction of the Act such '*ekdas*' were adopted in most of the patidar villages.

However, soon it became apparent that the '*ekdas*' were functioning badly largely because of non-adherence to its principles by the member families. The edicts of the '*ekdas*' were not in the form of written documents and no mechanism was evolved to impose them strictly on the member families. Moreover, '*ekdas*' were silent on curbing unnecessary wedding expenses. As a result, with the exception of a few in Ahmedabad they gradually fell into disuse in most places. On the other hand, the 13 '*kulia*' villages continually increased their demands for dowry, and as their material condition substantially improved, competition for alliances with the more

honourable villages increased. There was even more extravagance at wedding than before. The outcome was that before long the birth of a daughter in a '*akulia*' household once again came to be looked up on as a family misfortune. Thus, despite novel intentions '*ekdas*' failed to serve the purpose of setting right the faulty marriage customs and the initial euphoria gave way to disillusionment with it.

Though after passing the Act of 1870 the birth rate of female child has increased and the census of 1872 registered an increased percentage of girls in the lewa caste but the custom of female infanticide continued. In the district like Kheda it was extremely difficult to detect the presence of infanticide from the criminal returns, or from the results of the annual and decennial census. As Mr. Ashburner once asked, "How it is possible that complaints can reach Government? Are the parents who murdered the infant, or the relatives who are interested or the caste which approves the dead, likely to give information?" The heads of the suspected villages were almost invariably lewas and their local influence was overwhelming. Again, the very nature of the crime, as ordinarily practiced, almost defied detection. When asked once how the newborn female infants were killed, a headman had replied "What labour is there in crushing a flower"? Either starving the baby to death or placing it in a pan of milk with its face downwards was the

usual course adopted. In the former case no evidence of the fact could be derivable from an examination of the body; and in the latter case also death would probably be attributed to natural causes. Thus, complete control of the community in the countryside thwarted any State effort to improve the condition of women.

Even though Sayajirao III also introduced rules curtailing marriage expenses in the lewa patidar caste, these were not enforced with strictness. It was not uncommon to refuse to send a bride without demanding a larger payment for her than the rules permitted.²⁵

However, on paper, in the notification issued for the purpose of checking the exorbitant marriage expenses among the lewa patidars, the infringement of any of the rules laid down therein was considered penal and made punishable.

IV.1.3:- Efforts among the Kadwas

A meeting was held at Ahmedabad on 18th Feb. 1889, under the Presidentship of Mr. Sheppard, Commissioner of Northern Division. It was attended by the Patels of Unjha, the Desais of Patri, and other kadwa Patels from many places in Ahmedabad, Kheda, Surat, Baroda, Patri and Kadi. It

²⁵ Ibid, p. 208.

was also attended by the Collector of Ahmedabad and the Gaekwad's officials.

A set of rules was prescribed for limiting the expenditure incurred in connection with marriages among kadwa kanbis and a copy of the circular were issued to Patels and Talatis.

The collector of Ahmedabad requested the dewan of Baroda State to permit the Subas of Kadi and Baroda to circulate the notice and the rules together with copies of a voting paper to the Talatis and Patels of the villages where kadwa kanbis resided with the instruction to explain the rules fully to the kadwa kanbis residing in their villages and to obtain their signature on the voting papers.²⁶

The rules regarding marriage expense were assented to by the people under the impression that the Mata or Devi at Unjha would consent to marriages at shorter intervals than the prevailing custom of solemnizing marriages in the community once every 11 or so years. The Unjha Patle and the principle God (astrologer) themselves stated that the Goddess' consent might be assumed and it was hoped that the way for the reform would thus be smoothed.²⁷ But the Mata did not give her assent for such a reform.

²⁶ Ibid, File 2, p. 25.

²⁷ Ibid, p. 71.

Even Shambhu Prasad's efforts to reform the marriage system failed to induce the Patel of Unjha to have two dates fixed for the purpose, one for 1890 and one five years later, thereby reducing the intervals between marriages.²⁸

The orthodox heads of the caste did not carry out their promise of fixing two dates for holding marriages instead of one, and as the existing custom of celebrating marriages once in 11 years or so was upheld this resulted in competition among families for alliance and extravagant weddings.²⁹ The Baroda Government was also not in favour of imposing rules to curb marriage expenses among the Kadwa Kanbis.

First of all, the Subhas of Baroda thought that female infanticide which was supposed to have prevailed among the kadwas because of exorbitant marriage expenses was not necessarily the cause of the practice in Baroda State itself and he observed, "There is hardly a case on record to support that infanticide is committed for the fear that the marriage expense will bring ruin upon the family". He expressed his doubt whether there was infanticide among the kadwas as it was alleged by the framers of the rules. Furthermore, he wondered whether the marriage expenses among the

²⁸ Ibid, p. 104.

²⁹ Ibid, p. 104.

kadwas were really so exorbitant as to induce them to perpetrate the most heinous crime.

From enquiries made, it appears that the girls were better looked after and better fed than the boys because the supply was smaller than the demand and consequently the girls stood a better chance of fetching a higher price in the marriage market.

Exchange marriages were very common among the Kadwa patels and were arranged among persons living in certain villages called on account of those arrangements 'gols' or circles.

These circles were fourteen in number. Each circle had its own rules regulating its marriage expenses as well as exchange or profiting by giving away of girls. Even a slight deviation from the rule used to attract imposition of penalty. For such a society, no better law could be devised than the one they themselves had enacted and made binding. The society itself was considered capable enough to check such evil without any legislation. The parents who sold their daughters were held up to public ridicule. This ignominy was a sufficient and wholesome deterrent to dissuade people from practices which condemn them to disgrace.³⁰

³⁰ Ibid, pp. 120-26.

The Naib subhas of Baroda after enquiries to the marriage expenses reported that the expenses were too small to require any legislative interference – the smaller being Rs. 6 and the largest being Rs. 17. However, there were certain houses in the Kadi division which incurred a greater expense than that above pointed out.

Therefore there was hardly any necessity of introducing any legislative measure. On the contrary, any legal interference could be viewed as an encroachment on the private concerns of the society.

This is how the Subha of Baroda argued against adoption of the rules framed by the Bombay Government to regulate the wedding expenses of the kadwa kanbis living in British territory.

IV.1.4. Efforts of Jodavar Singh Kuber Singh of Patdi (Baroda) for Social Reform

Patdi Darbarshree Jodavar Singh was aware of the backwardness of his caste members and the insecurity of women because of various evil practices related to them. He aimed to improve his society by abolishing public ignorance and various evil customs. In 1848 he therefore called a meeting at Patnagar of Patdi Darbar in which some 40,000 people took part. Jodavar impressed upon the assembled people to abolish all caste

distinctions and beseeched unity of all caste groups. On the basis of his speech the following resolutions were passed:

1. Restriction on marriage of girls outside 'gols' to be lifted and rules would be framed to enable the girl's parents choose a groom for their daughter even from outside a gol. Similarly there should be no restriction to bring a bride from outside own village or Gol.
2. Exchange marriages should be stopped.
3. Symbolic marriages of girls to a bunch of flowers should be stopped.
4. Holding collective weddings only once in ten or eleven years should be discontinued. It should be made more frequent.
5. Selling of girls were forbidden.
6. A man would not divorce his wife without proper reasons. If the wife was without an issue, was above 35 years of age, or if blind, handicapped or having other defects than only he would be allowed to remarry.
7. A man married a second time would be required to provide maintenance to his first wife.
8. A person must marry within his own caste.

9. Engagement would not be broken without a genuine reason. If the girl was blind, handicapped, or having other genuine defects only then engagement could be broken.
10. If a married man was not capable of supporting his family then his wife could remarry but only with prior permission of the village elders.
11. At marriage the bride's father should pay to the groom a sum between Re. 1 and not exceeding Rs. 199. No further dowry should be demanded on any other ground.³¹

Bechhardas Laskari was also in favour of the above resolutions and called people of nearby villages and adopted measures to bring into effect the rules formed by Patdi Darbar by taking signatures of 6 to 7 thousand people on a stamped paper in 1861 in which it was stated that –

- (1) Whatever resolutions were passed in 1848 in the meeting of Patdi should be obeyed, i.e. followed by all.
- (2) Children of only those who signed the agreement could get married to one other.
- (3) Those who signed should form a committee to run it.
- (4) Those who opposed the rules would pay a fine of Rs. 701.

³¹ Ibid, p. 149.

Although the Zamindars and some other influential people were against the rules of Patdi Darbarshree, Bechhardas Laskari got support from many people and also of the Collector of Ahmedabad, Mr. Borrodaile. He ultimately extended implementation of the female infanticide Act III of 1870 to the kadwas in addition to the lewas. Imposition of the female infanticide Act to the kewa kanbis has been discussed earlier.

IV.1.5. Community Meeting in Ganpatpura of Baroda

In 1908 meeting was organized by social reformer Bechharbhai Raijibhai in his own residence at Ganpatpura of Baroda. All the kadwa patidar families staying with Baroda division were invited to attend the meeting. Social reformers who were invited included Mukhi Moijidas Sakhidas Mobala, Purushottam Hargovindas, Vidyavilas Presswalla, Jasaraj Shivilal Mansukhram, and Shivilal Mansukh Ram. Among the invitees of kadwa patidar groups outside Baroda division included Desai Narander Jorabhai of Viramgam, Desai Kalidas Harjeevandas, Editor of Kadwa Vijay Keshablal Madhavlal, Purushottam Lallubhai, Chief Secretary of Kadi Pranth Khedut Samaj Amin Maniklal Radhabhai, and the Joint Secretary Kalol taluka Chhaganlal Pitamabardas. Some prominent lewa patidars also attended the meeting. The principle invitees among the lewas were

Makandas Mathurbhai Gupte, Shivabhai Hirabhai, and Pujabhai Mithabhai.

The following resolutions were passed in the meeting:

- (1) Girls below 13 years of age should not be married. Any violator had to pay a fine of Rs. 57 to the Punch.
- (2) Any case of selling girl would invite a fine of Rs. 101 from the groom's father and Rs. 201 from the bride's father.
- (3) A case of exchange marriage would inflict a fine of Rs. 201 separately on both the sides.
- (4) A girl's marriage outside the caste would invite a heavy fine of Rs. 501.
- (5) Breaking of an engagement would entail paying a fine of Rs. 101.
- (6) A person could not divorce his wife without informing the Punch. One could do so by paying Rs. 5.
- (7) Any man driving away his wife from the house without any fault could be removed from the caste.
- (8) Singing of 'Phatana', i.e. obscene songs during marriages was forbidden; offenders could be fined.
- (9) Breast beating custom was forbidden in the case of person expiring was above 50 years of age.

(10) Feeding the whole caste was forbidden if the deceased person was above 35 years of age. Violation of the rule would invite a fine of Rs. 25.

(11) Any one protesting to send his children for school education was to pay fine of Rs. 5¼ .

Progressive minded members of 96 village gol of Tarsali invited the organizers to their villages to arrange similar meetings.

IV.1.6. The Role of Newspapers

The contribution of general newspapers and community magazines of both lewa and kadwa patidars were quite significant to create awareness among the caste members. Issues related to social evils denigrating women were frequently taken up.

The first newspaper of Gujarat '*Vartaman Patra*' was started on 2nd May, 1849 by the Gujarat Vernacular Society. It was a weekly brought out every Wednesday. Indirectly its responsibility was taken by a kadwa patidar named Bajibhai Amirchand Patel. And the newspaper became so popular that it could successfully compete with the other popular newspapers of the

period such as '*Khabar Darpan*'. Bajibhai started Sheela Press in Ahmedabad to Publish this newspaper.³²

Another newspaper '*Patidar Mukhpatra*' quite often highlighted the evil custom of child-marriage as a stumbling block in the way of female education. The dreadful effect of excessive dowry demands on marriage was also highlighted by the vernacular newspapers. A slow impact of such drives was also noticed in the papers.³³

The importance of women education was also impressed upon the minds of readers. The newspapers also protested against the customs of easy divorce, 'natra', singing 'phatana' at marriage, selling of girls, polygamy, etc. and appealed not to waste money unnecessarily for these customs.

The effort of the contemporary newspapers was to link all prevailing social evils with a lack of spread of formal education. On one hand abolishing all social evils was advocated. On the other, they tried to mobilize informed opinion to spread education by avidly supporting founding of more and more Gujarati Schools.³⁴

³² Mangubhai Patel, *Patidar Pragati*, op. cit., p. 264; Bechhardas Laskari opened a bank at Ahmedabad for printing purpose. Another bank named Bajibhai Aminchand Bank was opened by Baihibhai to meet the expense of printing newspaper. Gradually he became famous as a printer. His reporter was Lallubhai Raichand—Mangubhai Patel, *Patidar Pragati*. Op. cit., p. 264.

³³ Ibid, p. 265.

³⁴ Ibid, p. 268.

A quarterly magazine '*Swadeshi Hitavardhak*' was started by poet Jeshanbhai Trikamdas Patel of Bavla in 1883. It was published till 1890. It discussed the evil and dreadful custom of dudh peeti (killing of female infants by drowning their head in a pot of milk). As we have seen already, this custom was abolished by the British Government with the Act VIII of 1870 and with the help of Bechhardas Laskar.³⁵

Another magazine '*Vijay*' used to discuss various issues like historical events, life of Swami Vivekananda, female education, caste reforms, caste news, religious events, etc. This monthly magazine was stopped in 1906 and replaced by '*Kadwa Vijay*'.³⁶ It was started by Keshulal Madhavlal and Purushottam Lallobhai.³⁷ It worked for reform in the Kadwa caste till 1928. This magazine published reports on Kadwa *Patidar Shubhechchha Samaj*'s Mahaotsav.³⁸

In 1937 '*Patel Masik*' was started from Ahmedabad by Maganlal Ranchhodlal Patel. Like others he also focused on the evil customs like polygamy, dowry system, easy divorce, mismatch, Kulinism, etc. This paper lasted for three years.

³⁵ Ibid, p. 268.

³⁶ Ibid, p. 268.

³⁷ Dadakia Chandrabara, *Kadwa Patidar Parishadma Stree Prashna Pratyeno Abhigam*, Ahmedabad, p. 104.

³⁸ Mangubhai Patel, *Patidar Pragati*, op. cit., pp. 268-69.

Another paper '*Kulin Sahi*' protested against all social evils and appealed for freedom and emancipation of women. It was started from Bombay by Mahipatbhai Patel.³⁹

Newspapers of Lewa Patidars

The '*Patel Bandhu*' magazine was started after one year of '*Kadwa Vijay*', i.e. in 1907. Its editor Kubershibhai Mehta was influenced by the spirit of nationalism. '*Patel Bandhu*' used to give valuable information on both lewa and kadwa society and about various conferences organized by the both group of Patidars.⁴⁰

Besides Patel Bandhu another newspaper '*Patidar*' also worked a lot for reforming society and showed courage to protest against social evils related to women. Lal Singh of Viramgam called a meeting in Samvat 1963 (i.e., 1907) and invited important persons from the community, such as Manilal from Ahmedabad, Prof. Jethalal and Jivanlal and viewed the importance of monthly magazines for spreading progressive thoughts. Though Dwarkadas started Shree Kadwa Patidar Hithvardhak Mandal to bring social reform, most of the local persons did not support him and it had to be closed down.

³⁹ Ibid, p. 273.

⁴⁰ Ibid, p. 274.

Among various newspapers of patidars that appeared in the first half of the twentieth century the eminent ones are mentioned below:

1. '*Patidar Bandhu*' in 1908 from Banjhu
2. '*Patel Bandhu*' in 1909 from Surat
3. '*Patidar Patrika*' in 1922 from Anand
4. '*Patidar*' in 1923 from Anand
5. '*Kanya Bengard*' in 1931 from South Africa
6. '*Patel Patidar*' in 1940 from Ahmedabad
7. '*Patel Pragati*' in 1947 from Ahmedabad
8. '*Patel Gaurav*' in 1943 from Ahmedabad
9. '*Patidar Samaj*' in 1943 from Anand
10. '*Patidar Mitra*' in 1943 from Mumbai
11. '*Patidar Bandhu*' in 1943 from Ahmedabad
12. '*Patidar*' in 1953 (for both kadwas & lewas)
13. '*Patel*' in 1938 (for both kadwas and lewas)⁴¹

IV.1.7. The Role of Patidar Caste Associations

During the first half of the twentieth century many caste associations came into existence. Patidars became aware that other communities such as

⁴¹ Ibid, pp. 276-77.

the brahmins and banias had progressed a lot by bringing reforms through their caste organizations. They also realized that reforms could come out successfully when community as a whole approved the measures. Thus, patidars also formed similar caste associations with the intent to abolish prevalent evil social customs through these organizations and thus tried to reform their community.

Chaturbhai Radhabhai Amin and his brother Amin Maniklal of Kadi started *Kadi Prant Khedut Patel Samaj* and its first meeting was called at Kadi in 1907. It was another thing that survived for long.⁴² Slowly people started mustering courage to break the caste rules. To illustrate the change, a kadwa Patel Harjivan Bhagawan who owned Dharma Vijay press in Bombay celebrated the wedding of his younger son Amritlal to Vidyagouri in 1907 without waiting for the Umia Mata's date for group marriage. Though Brahmins of Sidhpur near Unjha and few other persons vehemently criticized the step and threatened them to stop the marriage the recalcitrant parties performed the marriage.⁴³

Kadwa Patidar Parishad's 12th Mahotsav or annual conference was specially organized for women of Kadi on Dec. 28th – 30th, 1930. It was attended by important women who freely expressed their views through

⁴² Dodakia Chandrabara, op. cit., p. 104.

⁴³ Ibid, p. 158.

speeches. Parvatiben, one such speaker, in her speech appealed to women not to become 'Abala Naree', i.e., weak women. She urged them to emulate Shivaji's mother and to gain confidence for making progress.

Laxmiben requested them not to waste children's lives by marrying them at young age. Savitaben solicited abolishing 'Ghumta Pratha' as it came in the way of progress of women. In the above conference, three issues that got prominence were: child marriage, exchange marriages and caste hierarchy. The conference asked to abolish all these three evils. The Parishad thus aimed to bring progress in patidar society by removing most visible social evils.⁴⁴

In 1938 *Kadwa Patidar Parishad's* 14th meeting was held under the Presidentship of Nandubhai Mancharam. It was held at Patdi Darbar in which resolutions were passed for the abolition of child marriage and polygamy and also to give right of divorce to Hindu women. The Parishad thought it necessary to help those divorced women whose ex-husbands did not provide maintenance for them and their children. The resolution which was passed by the *Mumbai Dhara Sabha* regarding this was accepted by the Parishad. The Parishad requested the Government to check cases of child-marriages at various places by appointing local Government agencies. The

⁴⁴ Ibid, pp. 135-37.

Parishad spoke against selling of girls, selling of grooms; exchange of wives. It also protested against the custom of giving dowries in cash or in kind to the groom's party by the bride's party.⁴⁵

Associations for social reforms were established in various villages in Chanasma, Viramgam, Rander, Surat, Baroda, Sardov, Mansa, Visnagar, Mehsana, Radhanpur, and in Upleta. Women from all walks of life were invited as they were also given financial support to attend the meetings.

In the *Kachh Kadwa Patidar Samaj* meeting in Bombay women took part in large numbers. Lalita Gouri was one of them. In *Bavra Parishad* at Ahmedabad Parvatiben organized a meeting of 800 women. Thus, slowly awareness emerged among women because of coming into existence of various Parishads, social reform measures undertaken, and due to educational developments. For the spread of women education, Kanya Kelavani Mandal was established in Kadi, Similarly *Baroda Kelavani Mandal*, *Bharuch Kelavani Mandal*, etc. were also established.

In 1945 Progressive minded people from kadwa patidar group held meeting for the abolition of child marriage, and reduction of funeral expenses at Unjha. It was chaired by Durgaprasad Laskari. Although many

⁴⁵ Ibid, pp. 138-40.

more Parishads came into existence after the independence, by then the reform-oriented activities had lost much of their previous momentum.

IV.1.8. Census Reports on changes among Patidar Women

During the first half of 20th century there was a stirring of reforms in the social atmosphere of Baroda as a result of Sayajirao III's efforts to bring changes in women's status through legislation such as The Widow Remarriage Act (1901), Child Marriage Prevention Act (1904), Special Marriage Act (1908), Hindu Divorce Act (1931), and Hindu Women's Property Act (1933).

As a result of Maharaja's initiatives there was stirring everywhere and men's minds were deeply moved to raising the status of women. It is interesting to note that social changes were first noticed among women belonging to the upper castes i.e, Brahmins, banias and patidars, and they came forward for the first time to accept and enjoy the great ambition of the Maharaja. Parents among these castes in large number cared about the education of their daughters and their example was afterwards followed by people belonging to other castes. Therefore credit goes to upper caste members for bringing social changes among women by educating them and also by protesting against various social evils.

However, the Patidars were little late to come under the influence of late marriages of girls. A curious customs of celebrating marriages in the whole caste on a single day, once in every nine, ten or eleven years was largely responsible for that.

As another period of nine, ten or eleven years must elapse before regular marriages could again take place, every family provides all its unmarried members with suitable matches. Children as small as one-month old infants and sometimes even unborn babies were being married off. This practice was started in the light of lack of marriage dates for girls of age group considered appropriate for marriage. And because before the next regular marriage day she would already attain marriageable age some special arrangements had to be made. Two practices were introduced to solve this problem. According to one of these, on the propitious day the girl would be married to a bunch of flowers. The flowers were then thrown in a well or river. The parents of the bride bathed and the girl now considered a widow could at any time, be married according to the simple 'natra' or second marriage procedure. According to the second practice, some married man would be induced for a small sum of money to undergo rituals of marriage with the girl. The deal was that he would divorce her as soon as the ceremony was over. The girl could then, at any time, be married according

to 'natra'.⁴⁶ Official interpretation provided a rationale to this custom of holding periodic marriages on a certain day in the whole caste in the economy of time and money. It was argued that the kadwa kanbi caste was a busy agricultural community and the periodic marriages saved time. Moreover the custom of having them on the same day in the whole caste, dispensed with the necessity of caste-dinners, as in house there would be a marriage and consequently its own feast.

According to 1911 census report the total number of infants married before the age of 5 was 19,240 in the whole Baroda State of which 12,818 or nearly two thirds belonging to the kadwa kanbis. Judging from the light of statistics furnished by the census of 1911, the Infant Marriage Prevention Act (1904) did no seem to have succeeded in achieving any significant result during the first half of the twentieth century. No less than 22,218 applications were made for seeking exemption under the Act. The finding that permission was accorded to 95 percent of such petitions and refused in 5 percent only shows that the courts were very indulgent in their treatment of applications for exemption. This is understandable in view of the judicial officialdom being drawn from the high caste Hindu background sharing the same social and cultural values as the applicants.

⁴⁶ *Census of India*, Baroda, 1911, p. 173.

Even after a decade, i.e. in 1921, the kadwa kanbis were the greatest sinners in the matter of marrying their girls before twelve. This is reflected in table-10 which shows data on the proportions of children under 12 married in the representative castes. The table shows that the highest number of married girl child between the age of 5-12 belonged to the kadwas (216 per 1,000). In this regard the lewa kanbis were slightly better. However, the lewas showed strong tendency of child marriages especially in the age group of 5-12 with a ratio of 193 married girls per 1,000.

Table-10

Child Marriage among the High Castes of Baroda, 1921

Name of the Caste	Number per 1000			
	Males		Females	
	0-5 years	5-12 years	0-5 years	5-12 years
Deshastha Brahmin	13	26	4	41
Nagar Brahmin	---	17	7	82
Anavil Brahmin	---	25	10	64
Audich Brahmin	3	28	14	104
Lewa Kanbi	9	76	18	193
Kadwa Kanbi	34	121	63	216
Bania (Jain)	6	19	3	69
Bania (Hindu)	2	22	4	50

Source: *Census of India*, Baroda, 1921 p. 232

The tendency of child marriage among the two higher castes, viz. brahmins and banias was a little less than the patidars. Between the ages 0-5 years the brahmins of deshastha, nagar, anavil, and audich showed ratios of

4, 7, 10 and 14, respectively per 1000 while in the age group of 5-12 years among the respective castes were 41, 82, 64 and 104, respectively. The ratio of married girls among the jain and Hindu banias in the age group of 0-5 were 3 and 4 respectively while in the age group 5-12 the ratios were 69 and 50. Therefore, brahmin and bania community seemed to have started discouraging child marriage to a certain extent in the first half of the twentieth century.

It would be interesting to see how society powerfully dictated the state its irrationalities. The Infant Marriage Prevention Law was passed in July 1904. The law fined the lowest age at which marriage was permissible as 12 for girls and 16 for boys. Exemptions were granted in the case of girls between the age of 9 and 12 under special circumstances. An amendment in the enactment was made regarding kadwa kanbis. Though the movement against the periodical marriage custom of the caste had been growing in strength yet representations were made by the reformist leaders to reduce the age of marriage for girls to six years and that of boys to eight years as a special concession to this community.⁴⁷

In the first seven years of its existence the law had to encounter the sullen opposition of the people. It was at first applied with little strictness;

⁴⁷ Ibid, p. 235.

and the proportion of rejection of applications for permission to marry infants was only about 5 percent. According to the 1921 census report, there were 23,338, convictions under the Act in the first seven years of its operations or 3,341 convictions per year.

The number of convictions under the Act in the first ten years are shown in Table-11. The year 1920 happened to be kadwa kanbi marriage season. There was thus a total of 40,510 convictions in the decade, or 4,051 annually.

Table-11

Convictions under the Infant Marriage Prevention Act, 1911-1920.

Year	Number of offences	Number of convictions
1911	6,317	5,180
1912	2,216	1,684
1913	2,308	1,800
1914	3,259	2,640
1915	3,334	3,450
1916	4,837	4,421
1917	7,407	6,037
1918	3,741	2,989
1919	4,535	3,718
1920	10,351	8,591

Source: *Census of India*, 1921, p. 235

Table 12 highlights the dismal picture of marriages of young girls among the patidars.

Table 12

Proportion of Married and Widowed Women among lewas and kadwas

Caste Community	Proportion of married and wiedowed per 1000 women			Proportion of married and widowed per 1000 women who are aged		
	Age 0-5	Age 0-6		Age 0-12		Age 0-13
Year	1911	1921	1931	1911	1921	1931
Kadwa	634	62	9	765	149	315
Lewa	31	18	25	114	123	161

Source: *Census of India*, 1931, Baroda, p. 199

In the above table the proportion of married and widowed patidar females aged 0-13 in the 1931 census is compared to corresponding ratios in 1911 and 1921 among women aged 0-12. If we take the earlier period 0-6 for 1931 and compare with the proportions for 0-5 in the previous two censuses we see little improvement. The very large increase of literacy amongst the Patidars had not been followed by any rise in the formal age at marriage.

Generally vernacular education had little effect in these matters. But where English education was really effective as in the 'upper ten' of the advanced groups, there we see a definite advance in the direction of adult marriage. Only Brahmin, bania and patidar groups had shown a high ratio of literacy in English amongst females. It was only where the women were highly educated that modern influences were said to have penetrated the home.

From Table – 13 it can be seen that the proportion of child-marriage among ages between 0-6 had decreased considerably. The highest number of married girls was 24 and 28 of lewa patidars and khedawal brahmin groups. The number of married girls among kadwas had decreased to 8 which were astonishingly significant. Between ages 7-13 the number of married girls showed a slight increase. Among the brahmins the highest number of girls married was 383 found among tapodhan groups. Among the patidars the kadwas showed a ratio of 584 married out of 1,000 which was highest among the three high castes of brahmins, banias, and patidars. The ratio of lewas was 305. The bania showed a very lower ratio as compared with brahmin and patidars and the highest ratio was 110 among khadayata bania.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ *Census of India*, 1931, Baroda, p. 210.

Table 13

Proportion of Child Marriage among Different High Castes

	Name of the caste	Distribution of 1,000 females of each age by civil condition					
		Age 0-6 years			Age 7-13 years		
		Unmarried	Married	Widowed	Unmarried	Married	Widowed
1	Brahmin	994	5	1	845	153	2
2	Anavila	999	1	--	927	71	2
3	Audich	996	3	1	828	169	3
4	Deshastha	978	2	--	989	9	2
5	Khedawal	972	28	--	721	276	3
6	Konkanastha	1000	--	--	992	8	--
7	Mewada	995	5	--	716	281	3
8	Modh	993	7	--	813	184	3
9	Nagar	992	8	--	900	95	5
10	Tapodhan	983	17	--	615	383	2
11	Lewa Patidar	975	24	1	690	305	5
12	Kadwa Patidar	991	8	1	398	584	18
13	Bania (Hindu Jain)	999	1	--	955	44	1
14	Disawal	1.000	--	--	901	95	4
15	Kapol	1.000	--	--	996	4	--
16	Khadayata	997	3	--	890	110	-
17	Lad	1.000	--	--	930	70	--
18	Porwad	998	2	--	959	41	--
19	Shrimali	999	1	--	974	25	1
20	Other Banias	999	1	--	953	44	3

Source: *Census of India*, 1931, Baroda, p. 210

The following table (table-14) shows the percentage of convictions according to castes in 1941-42. Among the three castes the banias responded most positively against child marriage showing a negligible ratio of 0.3 convicted in child marriage. The brahmins though higher in number convicted in the social evil mentioned above but was better off than the kanbis. The ratio of kanbis was 19.7 who were convicted for child marriage.

It was noted in the census report of 1931 that substantive increase in literacy among patidars was not followed by any rise in the formal age of marriage. Literacy among the kadwas had risen from 217 to 319 and among the lewas from 395 to 497 per thousand but there was no corresponding improvement with regard to child marriages. The curious custom which prevailed among the kadwas of 'mass marriages' once in nine, ten or eleven years was a serious obstacle to reform.⁴⁹

Table-14

Convictions of Child Marriage 1940-41

Year	Brahmins	Banias	Patidars
1940-41	3.0	0.3	19.7

⁴⁹ Baroda Administrative Report, 1941-42, p. 91.

According to the Baroda Administrative Report 1943-44 (table-15) the number of persons convicted among brahmins, banias and patidars was 144, 32 and 1075, respectively. This indicates that the patidars continued with the custom of child marriages in large number even as late as in 1943-44. In comparison, the attitude of the brahmins and banias showed a slight change.

Table-15

Caste-wise Convictions against Child Marriages, 1943-44

Name of Caste	Number of Persons Convicted
Brahmin	144
Bania	32
Kanbi	1,075

Source: *Baroda Administrative Report 1944-45*, p. 103

Widow Remarriage

Widow remarriage was prohibited among the brahmins and banias. Even lewa kanbis who had formally allowed it progressively stopped their widows getting married because this came to be considered as undignified. This was the result of a desire to raise their social status by adopting

brahminical practices which led the lewa kanbis to put a complete stop to widow remarriage by early twentieth century.⁵⁰

Table-16 presents the proportion of widow to the total women from the 1931 census report. The table shows that between ages 17-23, there were 70 widows and between ages 24-43 there were 303 widows per thousand women among the brahmins.

Table-16

Proportion of Widows per Thousand among High Castes

Caste	Proportion of widows among females	
	Aged 17-23	Aged 24-43
Castes traditionally disallowing remarriages		
Brahmin	70	303
Bania	48	284
Castes formerly allowing remarriage		
Lewa Patidars	28	161
Kadwa Patidars	28	174

Source: *Census of India*, 1931, Baroda, p. 200

Among lewa and kadwa Patidars between ages 17-23, there were 28 widows among both groups while between ages 24-43 there were 161 and 174 widows respectively.

The chief influences that operated against general return to the practice of remarriage of widows were :-

⁵⁰ *Census of India*, 1921, Baroda, p. 155.

- (i) The snobbish instinct that led the socially affluent sections within the intermediate and artisan groups to adopt distinctive customs of the advanced classes. The more was its desire to conform to the 'better Hinduism' of Brahmins and Banias.
- (ii) The rise of kulinism within those castes, a socially superior section which was hypergamous to the rest was a powerful factor against the general remarriage of widows.
- (iii) The anxiety of the early Hindu law-givers to restrict the women's rights to property had combined with the selfish interests of the family to keep the widow down and tended to forbid her to marry another so that her own circumscribed share in her late husband's property was not alienated by her second husband.

An acute shortage of marriageable girls seemed to have finally given way to loosening of earlier prejudices. The 1911 report mentioned a number of petitions from Sinor, Savli, Baroda and other places requested the government to make remarriage of widows compulsory. The disgruntled bachelors recounted their woes in these petitions owing to the paucity of virgin brides in their caste. The local Arya Samaj in the 1920's also attempted to popularize the idea of remarriage of widows amongst higher

castes. A permissive Act for the remarriage of widows had been in existence for many years and yet very few persons amongst the higher castes had taken advantage of it.

The condition of widows of lewa patidar was similar to that of the women of other high caste Hindus. There was no question of their second marriage. They were supposed to remove all jewelleries from their bodies. They were needed to wear rusted red coloured saree and blouse and after 1950's they started wearing white coloured sarees.⁵¹ Jayaben Desai, an elderly lewa lady informed that for a year they could not move out of home and were not allowed to take sweets, or attend any functions. Padmavati Amin informed that widows were supposed to stay in the houses of their in-laws. Even when they were tortured the parents insisted their daughters to stay with the in-laws. The only escape from the torture was to run away to temples where she would live rest of her life by worshipping and serving others. Most of the ladies contacted informed that they never heard about any remarriage of widows in their life-time.

On the other hand, most of the elderly kadwa patidar ladies and gents interviewed by me informed that widow remarriage was allowed in their caste. Only exception was Narayanbhai Patel and his wife Kusumben Patel

⁵¹ Jayaben of lewa group showed her widowed mother Sanjuben Chhotabhai Patel's Photograph, wearing a pair of rusted coloured saree and blouse with shaven head.

informing that marriage of widows was not a regular feature and in some village gols (such as the 12 village gol) remarriage of widows was simply not allowed. This could be the reason why Bhogilal Patel was declared an outcaste when he celebrated the marriages of his widowed sister Vidyaben and sister-in-law Sabitaben.⁵²

IV.2. Educational Development among the Patidar Females

Women education was not viewed as necessary among Patidars due to the following three reasons :

- (i) Caste members regarded that women were not supposed to go out for work. So there was no need of their education.
- (ii) Marriage of girls at very young age especially among the kadwas was a great deterrent.
- (iii) Being agriculturalists the males were not much educated. Therefore if the girls were educated, it would be difficult to get grooms for them.

This medieval attitude saw some shift during the first half of the twentieth century. Awareness gradually developed among the patidars especially among the social reformers of the community for the spread of

⁵² Informed Bhogilal's daughter Manjulaben Balkumar Patel of Karelibaug are of Baroda City.

education. Among these early reformers, Chhaganbha of Kadi gave importance to education for removing ignorance from the mind of people. He was totally against child marriage and regarded it as a dreadful and terrible custom which caused death of the young girls. So he decided to spread education in his society to remove darkness and ignorance from peoples' mind.⁵³ He was inspired by his Guru Swami Keshavan who gave him five rupees to start educational activities.⁵⁴ Initially he found it difficult to convince people about the importance of education. He started moving from place to place to make people conscious about the value of education. He explained to the people to make people conscious about the value of education. He explained to the people that only education can make them free from wrong beliefs and customs. Orthodox section of the community started arguing that they had to work in the fields, so what was the need of education for them.⁵⁵

However Chhaganbha realizing education to be the most remedial factor for eradication of ignorance and evil customs, set up 'Kadwa Patidar Kelavani Uttejak Mandal' in 1919 at Kadi where Kadwa Patidars were thickly populated. He also started a hostel name 'Kadwa Patidar Vidyarthi

⁵³ Mohanlal Patel, *Pragnadeep Chhaganbha*, Ahmedabad, (In Gujarati) p. 5.

⁵⁴ Ibid, p. 32.

⁵⁵ Ibid, p. 34.

Ashram' in 1920 at the same place.⁵⁶ Initially only eight students (all boys) were on the roll.⁵⁷

All efforts were made to propagate education. During vacation some motivated students were dispatched to the surrounding villages for educational propaganda. They would perform small plays and skits, give lectures, and would collect funds for the institution.⁵⁸

Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad III visited the institution in 1926. Before his visit he was cautioned that the institution promoted revolutionary activities. On his visit he encouragingly remarked that such revolutions should happen in every village of his State. Mahatma Gandhi also visited the institution and was pleased to see its works.⁵⁹

Chhaganbhai slowly and gradually accepted the need of women education for the balanced development of the community. Advocate Purushottamdas impressed him about the dire need of girl's education to compliment boys' learning. After careful thought he planned to educate those married young girls whose young husbands would come for education. But before he could translate his resolve to reality he passed away.

⁵⁶ Ibid, p. 44.

⁵⁷ Ibid, p. 47.

⁵⁸ Ibid, p. 119.

⁵⁹ Ibid, pp. 130-31.

Before death he requested Purushottamdas to fulfil his unsuccessful dream of educating girls. Significantly among the five objective of kadwa patidar Uttejak Mandal established by him the fourth objective was that female might be given as much attention as the male members were getting.

To provide hostel facilities of girls, Kanya Kunj was established in 1934. Though initially it was very difficult to get girl students but after 1935 slowly and gradually society began to understand the necessity of girls' education.⁶⁰

The contribution of Bechharbhai Raijibhai in the spread of female education is worth mentioning. He established Jeevan Bharati High School in Karelibaug area of Baroda. His keen interest in female education can be judged from the fact that he educated his two sisters-in-law Yashodaben Patel and Gauriben Patel up to Gujarati VI standard.⁶¹

His son Gordhanbhai was an equally enthusiastic social reformer of the kadwa patidar society. He served the society of Baroda for fifty years. In 1957 he started Ganpatpura Kelavani Mandal. Ganpatpura was a small village on the outskirts of Baroda. As a trustee he distributed free books, stationary, and dresses to the needy students. The Kelavani Mandal also constructed Bal Mandir for the village.

⁶⁰ Ibid, p. 144.

⁶¹ Informed Gouriben Patel and Yashodaben Patel.

Gordhanbhai also started Uma Kanya Chhatralaya for the girls students of Padra rural area. Fifty to sixty girls used to stay there. Under the guidance of a Guru mata the girls were also taught cooking, sewing, knitting, embroidery, house decoration, etc. in their free time.

Gordhanbhai was instrumental in raising awareness among the women. He strongly believed that the women should be educated; should come out of the four walls of homes; and attend the meetings on social reforms. Seeing the unwillingness of parents to send their girls to distant village schools he started arranging hostel facilities for the girls. For an illustration, a meeting was arranged at Shanpur village for this purpose and the participants agreed for the cause of girls' education.

Realizing the fact that child marriage was the hindrance to girls' education, he went from village to village to preach against child marriage. So he preached and tried to establish girls' schools where facilities were available. Gradually Kanya Kelavani Mandals were established at various places.⁶²

At the 12th Mahotsav of Shree Kadwa Patidar Parishad held in Daramgam village of Kadi taluka in December 1930 its President Ramchandra Jamnadas Amin told that boys and girls both should be

⁶² Informed Padmavati Amin.

educated without any discrimination. Kanya Kelavani Mandal make it compulsory to educate both boys and girls. He proposed to take advantage of the free and compulsory primary education system of Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad.⁶³

Vakil Purushottamdas said that girls should be given equal opportunity to make the best use of their natural talents. The great initiative and contribution of Sayajirao III of Baroda State in the field educations motivated even the most conservative elements in his State. His policy of free and compulsory primary education in 1906 and child marriage prevention act in 1904 in a way forced some of the parents of patidar community to send their girl children to school.

Table-17 shows that in 1901 only 14 females per 1,000 were literate. All were from the lewa patidar community and none from the kadwas.

Table-17

Progress of Female Education among Patidar Females in 1901.

Name of Patidar Caste	No. per 1,000 who are literate			No. per 10,000 who are literate in English		
	Persons	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females
Kanbi Lewa	178	316	14	30	56	---
Kanbi Kadwa	41	80	---	4	8	---

Source: *Census of India*, Baroda, 1911, p. 208

⁶³ Informed Mukundbhai Patel

Among the males 316 from the lewa patidars and 80 from the kadwas were literate. In respect of literacy in english, while the representation of females was nil, the number of males per 10,000 were 56 among lewas and 8 among kadwas.

Table-18 shows that in 1911 twenty-six females among the lewas and 8 females among the kadwas had attained literacy.

Table-18

Progress of Female Education among Patidars in 1911.

Name of Patidar Caste	No. per 1,000 who are literate			No. per 10,000 who are literate in English		
	Persons	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females
Kanbi Lewa	184	311	26	67	122	1
Kanbi Kadwa	74	136	8	14	27	--

Source: *Census of India*, 1911, Baroda, p. 208

Though as compared to males the ratios of literate females were very low but their representation, comparing ten years back, was much higher.

Table 19 shows that in women education the representation of lewa patidars had increased three times in 1921 over a period of 10 years from 1911 (79 females per 1000 literate individuals as compared to 26 per 1,000 in 1911).

Table-19**Progress of Females Education among Patidars in 1921.**

Name of Patidar Caste	No. per 1,000 who are literate			No. per 10,000 who are literate in English		
	Persons	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females
Lewa Patidars	259	414	79	104	192	2
Kadwa Patidars	122	219	18	21	41	--

Source: *Census of India*, 1931, Baroda, pp. 337-338

Even the number of kadwa females increased more than two times. The number of literate males belonging to the lewa and kadwas were 259 and 122 respectively during that period. As compared to the males the ratios for the females were remarkably low. But their representation was not very unsatisfactory compared to what was a decade ago.

In 1931 the number of women literate touched 163 per 1000 from 79 in 1921 indicating a more than two-fold increase over the 10-year period. And the representation of kadwa females rose to 46 in 1931 from 18 in 1921 (Table 20).

Table 20**Progress of female education among patidars in 1931**

Name of Patidar Caste	No. per 1,000 who are literate			No. per 10,000 who are literate in English		
	Persons	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females
Lewa Patidars	395	595	163	249	457	8
Kadwa Patidars	217	387	46	36	71	1.2

Source: *Census of India*, 1931, Baroda, pp. 337-338

The reason behind the wide gap in ratios of males and females was that too little importance was being given to female education. Social customs such as 'purdah', child marriage, denial of education to women, etc. greatly restricted women's activities only to domestic sphere, while the educational facilities and development in male-dominating Indian society was unthinkable.

But if we look back in 1891, the education of females of patidar groups was in a very backward state, which was practically nil. But slowly and gradually the ratio in education kept increasing every year. One important reason behind this fact was the earnest efforts of Maharaja Sayajirao III to make female education popular in his State and his practical steps in this regard for the realization of his ideal ambition.

The Patidar community was advanced enough during the twentieth century to realize the importance of female education. Therefore they had

come forward to take the wide opportunity provided by Sayajirao III. Among the two divisions, the progress of lewa females was remarkably higher than the Kadwas.

Table 21 shows that in 1941 the ratio of literates among lewa females had increased to 307 per 1000 which was 163 ten years back. This again meant a further increase by nearly two-fold over the decade.

Table-21

Progress of Female Education among the Patidars in 1941.

Name of Patidar Caste	No. per 1,000 who are literate			No. per 10,000 who are literate in English	
	Persons	Males	Females	Males	Females
Lewa Kanbi	497	664	307	83	4
Kadwa Kanbi	319	488	148	15	--

Source: *Census of India*, 1941, p. 111

Female literacy figures of kadwas increased to 148 which was 46 ten years back and was therefore remarkably higher than the previous census report of 1931. Thus, there was sustained and remarkable increase in the literacy rates among both lewa and kadwa patidar females. However, between these two groups the literacy progress of lewa females was more

remarkable. The number of female literate in english among lewas was four which was not available among Kadwas.

If we compare the literacy ratio of patidars with brahmins and banias in 1891 (as shown in Table-22, 23, and 24) literacy ratios of the lewa and kadwa patidar females were 0.22 and 0.02, respectively while that of the brahmin and bania females were 12 and 1.6, respectively.

Table-22

Females Education among Brahmin Caste in 1891.

Name of the caste	Males			Females		
	Total No.	Able or Learning to read or write	%	Total No.	Able or Learning to read or write	%
Brahmin: Nagar, Vadanagar and Visnagar	4493	2903	65	4428	522	12
Brahmin: Deccani (Karhada Kokanastha and Deshastha)	6863	5658	82	5913	323	6
Other Gujarati Brahmins: Audichya, Anaval and Shrimali	32107	15716	49	30591	360	1

Source: *Census of India*, 1891, Baroda, p. 320

Table 23**Progress of education among bania females in 1901 and in 1891**

Name of Caste	Males				Females			
	Total no.	Lite- rate	Per- centage in 1901	Per- centage in 1891	Total no.	Lite- rate	Per- centage in 1901	Perc- centage in 1891
Shrimali Disaval and Porvad Bania	9730	4110	42.24	76	6323	116	1.83	1.6

Source: *Census 1901*, Baroda, p. 351)**Table 24****Literacy ratios among patidar castes in 1881 and in 1891**

Name of caste	1891				1881				Increase + Decrease -			
	Learning		Literate		Learning		Literate		Learning		Literate	
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
Kanbi lewa	5.58	0.28	15.93	0.22	2.82	0.04	10.56	0.04	+2.76	0.24	+5.37	+0.18
Kanbi kadwa	1.83	0.01	5.56	0.02	0.90	—	3.05	0.01	+0.93	0.01	+2.51	+0.01

Source: *Census 1901*, Baroda, p. 351

Therefore, through the literacy ratios of all the three high caste females were quite negligible the representation of Brahmin females was much higher than the banias and patidars. Table-25 shows that in 1911, i.e., after twenty years the literacy ratios of lewa and kadwa patidars females were 26 and 8 respectively, signifying only a modest increase. On the other hand the literacy ratios of brahmin and bania females increased significantly. Table 25 also shows that literacy ratios of girls of Nagar and Deshastha brahmins communities held the first and second position with literacy figures of 229 and 129, respectively per 1000 literates.

Table-25
Progress of Females Education in 1911 among Brahmin, Bania and Patdar Castes

Name of the Caste	No. of females per 1000 who are literate	No. of females per 10,000 who are literate in English
Nagar Brahmins	221	54
Deshastha Brahmins	129	34
Modh Brahmins	825	--
Anavil Brahmins	71	9
Audich	38	3
Jopadhan Brahmins	30	--
Mewada Brahmins	36	5
Disaval Banias	87	--
Lad Banias	90	7
Shrimali Banias	81	4
Lewa Patidars	26	1
Kadwa Patidars	8	--
Anjama patidars	5	--
Karadia Patidars	1	1

Source: *Census of India*, 1911, p. 208

Third position was held by the Lad bania females with a ratio of 90 per 1,000 who were therefore ahead of the females of certain brahmin castes such as modh, anavil, audich, jopadhan and mewadas. Females of the disaval banias held fourth position with a ratio of 87 per 1,000 and were also ahead of the above mentioned brahmin castes. In comparison, the lewa females held a poor ratio in 1921 but with the passage of time they progressed satisfactorily as can be seen from table-26.

Table-26

Progress of Females Education in 1941 among Brahmin, Bania and Patidar Castes.

Name of the Caste	No. of females per 1000 who are literate	No. of females per 10,000 who are literate in English
Dakshini Brahmins	629	116
Nagar	603	85
Anavil Brahmins	527	22
Modh Brahmins	377	8
Audich	356	6
Disaval Banias	460	11
Lad Banias	471	22
Porval Bania	462	11
Shrimali Banias	452	12
Lewa Patidars	307	4
Kadwa Patidars	148	--
Anjuna patidars	77	--
Karadia Patidars	201	--

Source: *Census of India*, 1941, Baroda, pp. 110-111

Table-26 shows that the first, second, and third positions in female literacy were held by dakshini, nagar and anavil brahmins with ratios of 629, 603 and 527 respectively per 1000. The fourth and fifth positions were held by the lad and porval banias with ratios of 471 and 462 per 1000. The ratios of other brahmins and banias also showed satisfactory progress. Even among lewa and kadwa patidar females the literacy percentage had increased from negligible ratios of 26 and 8 per 1000, respectively in 1911 to 307 and 148, respectively in 1941 which was indeed remarkable.

Progress in english literacy among females of nagar and deshastha brahmins showed some progress. While in 1911 per 10,000 there ratios were 54 and 34 respectively in 1911 (see table-25) the ratios had increased to 116 and 85 respectively per 1,000 in 1941 (see table-26). The third position in English literacy was held by anavil brahmin females and also females of the disaval banias showing a ratio of 22 per 1000 English literate in 1941 (see table-26) which was 9 per 10,000 among the anavils in 1921 while in case of the disaval banias the ratio was nil (see table-25). Other groups of females of these three castes show negligible ratio even in 1941 while that was only 4 even in 1941 in case of the lewa patidars and nil among the kadwa patidar females.

Responses of the Lewa Women

Therefore women education among patidars in Baroda State during the period under study was not very popular (even during 1950's) in spite of Sayajirao III's efforts for the progress of women education. Sabitaben Chhotabhai Patel a trustee of Shaktikrupa Charitable Trust in Sinor recollected that at that period the school facilities in villages were not easily available. Patidar people did not think it was necessary to send their girls to school. Social system was such that people used to take it naturally that there was no need of education for girls. Even girls themselves did not take up the idea easily and used to respect the decision of elders.⁶⁴ Padmavati Amin who completed her junior B.A. informed that in general girls were sent to school up to standard V or VI only to learn reading and writing in gujarati. Society used to think that there was no need of higher education for the girls. Instead of giving them education they should be trained in domestic works. Jayben Desai, wife of an industrialist expressed that her parents firmly held the opinion that boys should be educated up to graduate level and girls up to matriculation.

⁶⁴ Informed Sabitaben Chhotabhai Patel.

Most of the patidar women who were interviewed informed that women education became popular only because of widely available educational opportunities provided by Maharaja Sayajirao III.

All the women who were contacted had gone to schools and some of them had experience of colleges. Ansuyaben Amin graduated in science from Baroda College in 1946. Thereafter she completed 2 years food processing course from Delhi. She got married in 1947 at the age of 22. After marriage she went to London all alone to do one year cosmetic chemistry and beautician's course. In London she used to stay at a friend's house. But after coming back she did not pursue the profession because of social restrictions. However she became a public face by virtue of becoming a member of the Baroda Municipal Corporation from 1956 to 1965. She was also a member of the M. S. University of Baroda syndicate and used to visit various faculties of the University.⁶⁵

Padmavati Amin was a student of Baroda College and was in B.A. Final year when she got married.⁶⁶ Jyothsnaben Dayabhai patel (age 78 years) graduated from Arya Kanya Vidyalaya in 1954 (assumed).⁶⁷ She got married at the age of 32. Kalindiben Nanavati, 67 years, did her M.Sc. in

⁶⁵ Informed Ansuyaben Amin.

⁶⁶ Informed Padmavati Amin

⁶⁷ Informed Jyothsnaben Dayabhai Patel

Home Science from the M. S. University of Baroda and served as a professor at M. S. U. Science Faculty. She is the daughter of former Vice-Chancellor of the M. S. U. Dr. S. C. Patel.⁶⁸

Padmavati Amin's younger sister Chandan Patel passed her B. A. from Baroda College around 1945. She was selected by the Banaras Hindu University for L. L. B. course and went there at the age of 24 with the full support of her parents. Rather than practicing law she went to Madras to for a dancing course under Harendra Nath Chatterjee and became popular as the favours dancer Chandralekha. She remained unmarried and is settled in Chennai.⁶⁹

Vasumati Mukundbhai Patel passed matriculation and went to college for six months to study a course in Arts but discontinued studies due to her marriage in 1945. She was then 20 years old.⁷⁰ Jayaben Desai, daughter of the famous industrialist Chhotabhai Patel passed matriculation in 1942, after which she got married at the age of 16.⁷¹ Sumatiben J. Patel, now 78 years old passed matriculation in 1938.⁷²

Savitaben Indubhai Patel, wife of industrialist Indubhai Patel, now 80 years old could study up to standard V as her mother was more interested to

⁶⁸ Informed Kalindiben Nanavati

⁶⁹ Informed by her elder sister Padmavati Amin

⁷⁰ Informed Vasumati Mukundbhai Patel

⁷¹ Informed by Jayaben Patel

⁷² Informed by Sumatiben Patel

involve her in household work. Her younger sister was interested in studies and was willing to continue with her studies after completion of all her household work but her family objected because they feared that they might not get a similarly educated husband.⁷³ Savitaben Chhotabhai Patel studied up to standard II in Pavijetpur and informed that her parents were ignorant about her studies and school facilities were also not good. She got married at the age of 15 when she was in the second standard.⁷⁴

Quite interestingly, Bhanuben, daughter-in-law of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, had to discontinue her college studies. When she got married, Sardar Patel's family did not permit her to continue her studies despite her willingness.

However, Maniben, daughter of Sardar Patel had been active in politics and according to Mukundbhai⁷⁵ "Had she not been with Sardar Patel he could not have done so much work".

Bhanuben's younger sister Sushilaben Chhotabhai Patel did her graduation from Baroda College in 1944. Interestingly she did it after her marriage for which her in-laws allowed her.⁷⁶

⁷³ Informed by Savitaben Indubhai Patel

⁷⁴ Informed by Savitaben Chhotabhai Patel

⁷⁵ Informed by Mukundbhai Patel, who himself was a freedom fighter and was a terrorist.

⁷⁶ Informed by Padmavati Amin.

Another lewa woman Mrs. Jayaparabha did her B.A. in 1953, B.Sc. in Home Science in 1956 from the M. S. University of Baroda. Moreover, she went to U.S.A. for higher studies and did her M.Sc. in Home Science. Miss Indira Patel passed her M. S. W. in 1954 and later became the Dean, Faculty of Social Work, Baroda. Mention here may be made of Dr. Sarlaben who passed M.B.B.S. and used to practice in Bombay.⁷⁷

Responses of the Kadwa Women

Educational progress of the kadwas compared to other caste groups was much slower. Shantaben Kesulal Patel, studied up to standard V in Gujarati medium from Padra taluka and informed that in Kadwa community no importance was given to the education of women and a girl's ability to write her name was regarded as sufficient. Gouriben Patel, 84 years, studied up to standard VI at Maharani Girls' High School, Baroda. When she got married she was studying in standard IV in Gujarati medium. After marriage she continued her studies up to standard VI because of her father-in-law Bechharbhai Rajibhai's initiatives. We have seen earlier that Bechharbhai Rajibhai was a great social reformer of Baroda and was in favour of women education. Gouriben, informed that women education was not popular

⁷⁷ Informed Kalindiben Nomabati.

among the Kadwas. Women used to do household work and her community used to view women's education as useless, as they were not supposed to go out for jobs. Yashodaben, 87 years, another daughter-in-law of Bechharbhai also studied only up to standard VI after her marriage. Her husband Ramchandrabhai used to run Jeevan Bharati Vidyalaya established by Bechharbhai. She used to take active part along with her husband to look after the necessities of the students of the school.⁷⁸

Another daughter-in-law of Bechharbhai, Kantaben, 83 years, studied up to standard VII at Jamnabai School in Dariapur area of Ahmedabad before marriage.⁷⁹ Another lady, Kusumben Patel, 64 years, studied up to standard VII in Gujarati in Mandir Shala of Kamli Gaon at Unjha taluka. When she was in standard IV her mother thought not to give her more education as it was against the custom of the community. Her mother thought it was necessary to teach her only house hold work. But her teacher impressed upon her parents to continue her studies as she proved herself as an intelligent student. Therefore her father allowed her to study till standard VII when she got married at 17 years to Narayanbhai Patel.⁸⁰

⁷⁸ Informed by Yasodaben Patel

⁷⁹ Informed by Kantaben Patel

⁸⁰ Informed by Kusumben Patel

Even after 1950 women education was not popular in the Patidar community. Kokilaben Dayabhai Patel, 54 years, a resident of Sama area of Baroda, who is highly educated and belongs to the modern age had faced criticism from her community and relatives for continuing her higher studies. For this reason she used to avoid visiting her native village at Morva in Kadi. According to her, she could successfully become a graduate in B.Sc. only because she was staying away from her village along with her parents. Interestingly, her parents had encouraged her education. More interestingly, her husband Prof. Dayabhai Patel who used to teach at the M. S. University had also encouraged her to continue her studies after marriage. As a result, she became L.L.B. and L.L.M. and is actively involved in many social works. She is the President of Chourasi Samaj Mahila Mandal established in 1978 in Kadi. She established its Branch in Baroda City in 1992. Its activity includes calling meetings twice a year to discuss about various financial and other problems of women, calling bank managers to give knowledge to women on how to operate bank accounts, calling gynaecologists for imparting them scientific knowledge on maternity, calling Home Science faculty teachers to teach them about healthy style of cooking foods, etc. She was the president of Jeevan Bharati High School and worked for Jeevan Bharati Girls' Chhatralaya, enquired about the problems of the

girl students, looked after their security and went to various villages of Baroda district to encourage the parents to send their girl children for education to the school.⁸¹

Overall assessment therefore is that women education was not at all popular among lewas and kadwas during the period under study. Though during the 50's of 20th century an increasing awareness were noticed especially among the lewa women to get formally educated, but that was not the case in overwhelming majority.

⁸¹ Informed by Kokilaben Dayabhai Patel