

Chapter 6

Modernity and Hadauti Women

Given the period of our study it is very important to ask what is 'modern', what different aspects define 'modernity' and when and how women fit in becoming 'modern'? As far as the European studies are concerned they had their own standards to understand and periodize history, dividing it into ancient, medieval and modern. But is it correct to understand Indian history through their prism? India and Europe have entirely different histories even though for a long time their intervention in India tends to blur India's image. One needs to keep in mind that transition does not always mean 'progress'; it might lead to a different phase but it is also not unsafe to presume that ancient was followed by medieval and so did modern. It can be true for Europe but not necessarily true for Indians. There is also a need to break the ideologies attached with these phases as ancient being rudimentary, medieval being barbaric while modern means progress. This Euro-centric methodology has also been applied in understanding Indian history which does not justify evolutionary process of India. In order to legitimize their rule in India British colonizers tried magnifying some of the most barbaric social evils. On the other hand the nationalist tried to rationalize such practices. But both the colonizers and nationalists brought out customs and practices followed by the elite, upper class/caste of the society. Both the white and brown elite conjoined in the reformist agenda from which the Indian masses

were excluded. The subaltern Group of historians critiqued this elitist nexus drawing attention to the neglected history of the people.¹ The present study focuses on the issue of 'modernity' in the context of Hadauti women, trying to bring out both the popular as well as the hidden, unheard and untouched aspects of the Hadauti society.

Soon after the East India Company tasted conquest in Bengal in 1757 its officers felt the need to gain knowledge about the conquered people; their administrators learned Persian and Sanskrit and started publishing it. Alexander Dow, an army officer, translated one of the standard Persian histories into English *The History of Hindustan in 1768-71* and N. B. Halhead compiled and translated the Sanskrit *Dharmashastras as A Code of Gentoo Laws, or Ordinations of the Pundits* in 1776. With the involvement of more officials such as, William Jones, H. T. Colebrooke, John Shore, and Francis Gladwin this process of learning Sanskrit and Persian as well as that of publishing texts and commentaries, gathered speed and led to the founding of the Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1784. From then on, a number of research journals emerged such as the *Asiatik Researches* (1788), the *Quarterly Journal* (1821), and

¹ Gyan Prakash, *After Colonialism: Imperial Histories and Postcolonial Displacements*, Princeton, N.J., 1995; Gyan Prakash, *Bonded Histories: Genealogies of Labor Servitude in Colonial India*, Cambridge, 1990; Ranajit Guha, *A Rule of Property for Bengal*, Paris, 1963; 'Neel Darpan: The Image of a Peasant Revolt in a Liberal Mirror', *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 2, 1974, 1-46; Ranajit Guha, *Subaltern Studies I* Delhi, 1982; Sharmila Rege, Dalit Women talk differently: A Critique of 'Difference' and towards a Dalit Feminist standpoint position, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 33, No.44, (Oct. 31-Nov. 6, 1998), WS39-WS46 and 'Real Feminism' and Dalit Women: Scripts of Denial and Accusation, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 35, No. 6, (Feb. 5-11, 2000), 492-495; Eleanor Zelliot, *From Untouchable to Dalit: Essays on the Ambedkar Movement*, New Delhi, Manohar, 1992.

the Journal of the Asiatic Society (1832). Orientalist knowledge spread to European universities and scholars with no direct contact with India, Max Muller in London and the Romantics on the continent, saw Europe's origins or childhood in India.² India was distanced in two ways in the search and discovery of European origins in India. Firstly, India was separated from Europe's present and was made incapable of achieving any 'progress' and secondly, composed of language and texts, India appeared to be unchanging and passive.³ This ideology made the British to take over the civilizing mission for India especially to the princely states.

For over a century between 1818 and 1947 the princely states of Rajasthan were indirectly ruled by the British. It meant that all the internal matters were dealt by the rulers while matters related to coinage, defense, communication and foreign affairs were managed by the British. It had its own implications when two patriarchies controlled the region it also affected the women and their roles and gender relations.⁴ The agenda of the social reform of the nineteenth century was more of political encounter between the colonizers and colonized rather being specific about the condition of women.

²Gyan Prakash, 'Writing Post-Orientalist Histories of the Third World: Perspectives from Indian Historiography', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 32, No. 2 (Apr., 1990), pp. 383-408.

³Ibid.

⁴Maya Unnithan-Kumar, 'The State, Rajput Identity and Women's Agency in 19th and 20th Century Rajasthan', *Indian Journal of Gender Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 1, January-June, 2000, Sage Publishing, New Delhi, 52. See Appendix, various tables show status of women in nineteenth twentieth century Hadauti and Rajasthan.

The entire argument was based on criticizing the Brahmanical texts which the Hindus follow and become the basis of exploitation of Hindu women.⁵

Imperialists proceeded and succeeded in their civilising mission through the process of 'othering', by defining the culture of the Orient and its people at an inferior level; thus legitimising western intervention.⁶ The impact of this colonial perspective placed Rajasthan in a very different category with prevailing practices of child-marriages, sati and female infanticide. Thus the British Empire identified the region of the Rajputs to be 'protected' legitimising colonial rule in the eyes of the colonisers as well as colonised.⁷ People were apprehensive about the change. But being hostile to modernity does not necessarily means being opposed to change. For the native states there was coexistence of change and persistence i.e. for the same person, group of persons or movements change could be both progressive and revivalist, reformist and reactionary, secular and communal.⁸ Native rulers too were hostile toward change although they did not oppose it but also never initiated to bring positive change needed for the society.

⁵ Partha Chatterjee, 'Colonialism, Nationalism, and Colonized Women: The Contest in India', *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 16, No. 4, November, 1989, 622-633.

⁶ Maya Unnithan-Kumar, *The State, Rajput Identity*, op. cit., 56.

⁷ Maya Unnithan-Kumar, *The State, Rajput Identity*, op. cit., 56.

⁸ Sudhir Chandra, *The Oppressive Present: Literature and Social Consciousness in Colonial India*, Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1994, 3.

The British produced resources that were made available to be used by the state politics, as well as used the resources of the states for the maintenance of empire.⁹ In order to break the feudal order the British armed force was made available to Rajput princes to subdue rebellious nobility and in return princes committed themselves to act in 'subordinate co-ordination' with the British.¹⁰ British played from both the sides in princely India; on the one hand they paralysed the entire mechanism of administration in the states and on the other they started declaring judgements on the rulers' governance. The one whom the British used to find incapable was criticised and took over the administration of that state. Even deciding on whom to adopt or who would be the next 'capable' ruler etc was done by the British for e.g. after the death of Maharao Shatrusal of Kota State, the British took over the political administration and 'trained' Maharao Umed Singh II 'as per their requirement'.¹¹ Same was the case with Maharaja Jai Singh of Alwar State who was a minor when he succeeded Maharaja Mungul Singh in 1892. Or to an extent Sayajirao III of Baroda who succeeded Khanderao and Malharao Gaikwad in 1875 and attained his western education.¹²

⁹ Robert W. Stern, 'An Approach to Politics in the Princely States', ed. Robin Jeffery, *People, Princes And Paramount Power*, Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1978, 358.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ See Jagat Narayan, *Kota ke Maharao: Umed Singh Dvitye evam Unka Samay*, Kota, Neha Vikas Prakashan, 1983.

¹² Edward S. Haynes, "Alwar Bureaucracy versus Traditional Rulership: Raja, Jagirdars and New Administrators, 1892-1910 and David Hardiman, "Baroda: The Structure of a 'Progressive' State", ed., Robin Jeffery, *People, Princes and Paramount Power*, Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1978, 39, 113-14.

Another blow to the feudal order came when the British began to display their policy of discrimination by reducing the authority of the queens as well as of the *thakuranis*. On the event of the sixtieth Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria in 1897 *Chavadi* Bakhtawar, queen of Maharana Fatehsingh of Udaipur, was honoured with the title of C.I.E. This was opposed by the *Chauhan* grandmother of queen *Chavadi* and also *Rajmata* Rathore but the British Council disregarded their views. It was also criticised by other queens of Jaipur, Jodhpur, Udaipur and Kota who were either from the bigger *thikanas* or their State was more powerful yet a queen from a very small *thikana* was honoured.¹³ This was enough to hurt the sentiments of the queens of the erstwhile princely states of Rajputana. The rulers and their kin were left with no other option than accepting the 'change' uncontested; it was the only way through which they could have been able to maintain their status within their clan and region.

The effect of it was seen in many queens visiting Europe and accepting the western culture and lifestyle by the twentieth century. All those women who were able to mould themselves with the changing time were accepted not just by the British political officers but even by their wives. These women were becoming examples of 'new progressive Indian women'. Their

¹³ Santosh Yadav, *Unnisavi aur Beeswi Shatabadi mein Striyon ki Stithi*, Jaipur, Printwell Publishers, 1987, 69.

transformation was a positive signal even for the British.¹⁴ The tendency of 'transculturation',¹⁵ to adapt and adopt western lifestyle, was visible in the royal Indian women.¹⁶ But unlike other Indian states women in Rajasthan even the royalty had a limited say in political decisions of the State due to patriarchal and religious constraints.¹⁷

Prior to the British there was a system that was good enough for the native rulers to administer their State and communicate with each other. Even women of the royal family were tutored like the boys at home and were able to read and write.¹⁸ But the common masses were kept away from the education. Captain Beynon mentioned about the knowledge of science, art and literature by the Maharao Ramsingh of Bundi (1821-69). But the Maharao lacked in professing the same for the people in the region. The tendency of

¹⁴ *Rajmata* of Maharaja Kishansingh of Bharatpur visited England twice in 1910 and 1914 when she also donated 10,828 rupees in the war-fund and 5,000 rupees in the 'Lady Chelmsford Mother and Child Welfare Project'. After her returning to India she worked with the wife of the Political Agent Bannerman in the 'Soldiers Comfort Fund' and donated 6,630 rupees for the same. They used to organise meetings in which the women of the family especially the wives were convinced and asked to allow their husbands to join the army and also encouraged them to donate some money for the war-fund. In 1916 *Rajmata* donated 25,000 rupees to the war fund. By this time wives and woman of the family of the British officers started visiting the *zenana dyodi* of the palace and made friendly relations with the women of the native princely states. Ibid., 70.

¹⁵ A term used by Mary Louise Pratt as to how subordinated or marginal groups select and invent from materials transmitted to them by a dominant or metropolitan culture.

¹⁶ Meera, Kosambi, *Crossing Thresholds: Feminist Essays in Social History*, Ranikhet, Permanent Black, 2007, 207.

¹⁷ Maya Unnithan-Kumar, *The State, Rajput Identity*, op. cit., 60.

¹⁸ See Appendix for data available regarding the status of education for women of Hadauti.

keeping them aloof from the people in general is visible in most of the cases in princely states of Rajputana.

The women of royalty took it as a matter of pride to adapt to the lifestyle of the British but without extending to other women of the region. This tendency was epitomized in the post-Independence Rajasthan where only one woman Gayatri Devi, widow of Jai Singh entered the politics in the initial years after independence.¹⁹

On the British civilising mission a larger question emerges what specific women reforms they had in mind when they criticised Hindu scriptures and texts. Or the 'women reforms' as Meera Kosambi said was dominated by male perception, there was hardly any contribution of women in it.²⁰ One needs to be more critical when trying to understand transition of the nineteenth-twentieth century India from a women's point of view. As far as the reforms are concerned it was for women and not by them, which means that women were not part of it. It was decided by men what and how changes should be brought for women; latter only to accept without contestation. The idea of reforms centred around on the upper class/caste women; the women from the lower castes were not even thought about. Elite women were

¹⁹Maya Unnithan-Kumar, *The State, Rajput Identity*, op. cit., 60.

²⁰ For further reading refer Meera Kosambi, *Crossing Thresholds*, Op. cit.

included only because the flow of the time was such which forced the 'patriarchs' to let some 'change' for display. The degree of change anyways was slow for women in India and hardly any for the low caste women.

In the dominant European discourse, the West gave privacy to the material sphere of life while the East was superior in the spiritual domain. That is why the late nineteenth century reformers argued that instead of imitating the West entirely the approach should be in cultivating and strengthening the material resources while retaining the spiritual domain. It is essential to understand the ideology of the nationalist struggle because it sketched the ground plan for a transition to modernity in the Indian context. It laid a roadmap even for the role of Indian women in the independent India. For the nationalist reformers made it clear that material domain is outside and the spiritual is within our true self. It was proposed as long as Indians would be able to maintain its spiritual distinctiveness without losing its true identity adapting to the modern material world would not be a problem. Their perception toward Indian women in changing time is crucial so to be able to evaluate how the male reformers took the question of women liberation during nationalist struggle. They viewed the distinction between the material and spiritual as profane and pure, stretching it as the outer world and home. Home represented women whereas the outside was dominated by the Europeans. The entire struggle for the nationalist reformers was to keep the colonizers away from encroaching in their inner sanctum. The wave of

keeping the inner sanctum pure from the profane influence of the European life, even though brought change in Indian society but was also condemned and criticized by many men too. Responsibility of nurturing, protecting the spiritual quality of the national culture was forced on the women who were expected to remain uninfluenced by the change in the outside world.²¹

Bengali *bhadramahila* adapted to the change much faster and easily than other women in India. The condition of the women in the princely states of Rajasthan was much challenging than the rest. Apparently quite a lot was being done by the colonizers and the rulers of the States by establishing number of schools and other institutions but hardly anyone bothered if these developments reached the commoners. With the passage of time the number of schools kept increasing but without spreading education to the mass. The A.G.G. of the Rajputana, Col. Lawrence mentions many regional schools all over the native states of Rajputana imparting education in Hindi, Maths and Persian. But pretty slow progress was also noted for the people at large. J.S. Mill wrote to Mrs. Sharlot Manning about his meeting with the native rulers and his gaining an insight how the queens of the princely states are educated enough to administer the state especially those queens who are the care-takers

²¹ Partha Chatterjee, Colonialism, Nationalism, and Colonized Women, *American Ethnologists*, op. cit., 622-633.

of minor kings. The queens and the *thakuranis* were independent enough to grant land, concessions and take other decisions for their respective *jagirs*.²²

Those educated either from the Mayo College or Imperial Cadet Core preferred marrying outside in the princely states of Kathiawar, Gujarat, Kuchh, Bhuj, Sailana States.²³ Similarly the *jagirdars* and the other *thikanedars* too married outside Rajasthan. It prompted the families of the rulers to promote English education even for their daughters that helped them to find better and suitable match. Usually education especially of girls was limited to the higher strata of the society. British contacted only those families where both the bride and the groom had achieved English education and were thus thought to be suitable for each other. While for the business communities marriages were more or less based on some business deal. With the importance of money the marriages too were done for the dowry or unmatched marriages became common. The father or brother arranged the marriage of their daughter or sister to someone who was either rich even if older than the girl or was ready to give large sum of money to the girl's family.²⁴ This hints to the unbalanced distribution of the ideas of progress in Rajasthan where the focus was primarily on the royal houses. The policy of the colonial state to abide by the local sentiments respecting a religion-based

²² Santosh Yadav, *Unnisavi Beesawi Shatabdi*, op. cit., 69.

²³ Ibid., 71-72. Also see Appendix table 14, showing the Comparison between the Kota State School with other State Schools in Rajasthan 1912-1913.

²⁴ Santosh Yadav, *Unnisavi Beesawi Shatabdi*, 80.

and limited education for women was visible.²⁵ It means that the so-called reformers of the Imperial Empire too had no serious intention of uplifting the status of women; instead they used them simply to legitimise their rule over Indian sub-continent.

The Census Reports of 1921 and 1931 highlights the problem of the Rajput girls remaining unmarried.²⁶ These young girls were unmarried because of the British intervention in deciding for the rulers and feudal heads whom to marry. Those left unmarried must not have been English educated. According to the census of 1921 in Rajasthan total number of women was 4,659,493 out of which literate were only 18,851 and English Educated barely 1171. In both capital city of Bundi out of 7,926 women, 211 were literate and only 1 was English educated in the Kota city out of 14,917 women, 523 were literate and 82 English educated in 1921. But for Bundi state as a whole out of 89,433 women, 312 were literate and 7 were English educated while in Kota state out of 303,045 women, 1,891 were literate and 196 were English educated.²⁷ The small numbers of the literate and 'English' educated makes it

²⁵ Kumkum Sangari and Uma Chakravarti, eds., *From Myths to Markets: Essays on Gender*, Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Simla, New Delhi, Manohar Publishers, 1999, xii.

²⁶ Santosh Yadav, *Unnisavi Beesawi Shatabdi*, op.cit., 74.

²⁷ Ibid., 100, 101. Also see Appendix for other census records regarding the status of education in Kota, Bundi and Jhalwar refer to Table No. 1 Table Showing the Status of Women's Education in Nineteenth Twentieth Century Rajasthan; Table No. 5 Table showing the Educational Level in Bundi district, 1961 Census; Table No. 6 Educational level in Urban Areas by Age and Sex in Bundi district, 1961; Table No. 7 Educational level in Rural areas by Age and Sex in Bundi district, 1961 Census; Table 8 Scholars in Educational Institutions (Colleges) in Rajasthan; Table 9 Table showing the Education Level in the Bundi district,

clear about the level of education among women in this part of Rajasthan. But it also points to the social change that was slowly making its appearance even in princely states.

The percentage of literate and English educated middle-class Hadauti women is far behind the middle-class educated Bengali women. Unlike largely British administered Bengal Rajasthan was generally a princely region ruled by the feudal Rajputs and hence there was very slow emergence of modern middle class. The middle-class non Rajput women could appear in politics only recently when reservations were made for women especially after 73rd Amendment in the Constitution which guarantees reservations of 33 per cent of seats for women on local councils at all representative levels in the state.²⁸

It is now to easily understand that the rulers of the Rajput states no doubt opened the schools based on the 'modern' lines but it was not because

1971 Census; Table 20 Comparative Statement of schools showing the number of student and their average daily attendance during the year 1915-16 and 1916-17 in Kota; Table 21 Table showing the Educational Standards of Kota district, 1961 Census; Table 22 Table showing teachers in Educational Institutions, Kota district; Table 23 Table showing number of educational institutions, students and teachers for various years, Kota districts; Table 30 Table showing gender-wise division showing the level of education in the Primary, Middle and High Schools in the four districts of Jhalrapatan, Pachpahar, Dag and Gangdhar for four years 1912, 1920, 1930 and 1940; Table 31 Table showing number of Institutions in three years between years 1951-1961, Jhalawar district and Table 32 Table showing students belonging to the Scheduled Castes and other backward communities in Jhalawar schools in 1958-59 and 1959-60.

²⁸ Maya Unnithan-Kumar, *The State, Rajput Identity*, op. cit., 61-62.

they wished to bring a positive 'change' but because they were more interested to come in the 'good books' of the British government. If their efforts and interests were genuine they would have prevailed upon people to see the benefits of girls' education. Instead a sudden jump from the 'traditional' methods of imparting education to the 'modern' system of education there would have been a slow but steady progress by bringing both the methods together then it would have helped people to transit much smoothly. English education was being forced upon people, the mindset of the people toward the English education was hostile and they were not ready to accept it. A letter to the Jodhpur ruler and the judicial member, it says:

... miss sawai ko 600 rupiye diye jate hai... vah padhne wali bahu betiyon se safai karvati hai... yah Kok Sahab (some Kashmiri prime minister) ko raja manati hai... so uska kya angrejo ko toh khushmad pasand hai... vah iski baton mein aa jate hai... miss meshik (first teacher) ne kabhi kaam nahi karvaya... yah hamari kanyaon ko randi bana degi... kya hamari kanyaon ko gaon mein randi bana kar naukari dilvayegi? Yah chhatraon ko tang karti hai... iss raj mahal ke andar har kisam ki dushtai chalti hai... ek vaeishya ghar bana hua hai...nai adhyapikaen iske darr se bhag jati hai... isko dekh kar hamari kanyaen bhi bigadto hai... yah gaon ke ustadnion ko galiya deti hai aur tankha katwane ki dhamki... Maharaj aap to hamari sunte nahi hai... Marwar ki sab kanyaon ko vidhvaon ko bigad kar nashat ho jaane do... tab jagna... ab ham apni kanyaon ko school bhejna band kar denge...

*hamari to bepadhi ko ghar basane do... padhi likhi hogi to iss bhagtan
ki tarah aath aakhen ho jayegi...*

The Education Department, Jodhpur in response to it asked the Jodhpur Judicial Member not to pay heed to these thoughts and also ordered the schools to take fine of rupees 5 from those students who had and wanted to complain against the schools.²⁹ There has always been intolerance for the girls' over boys for there were scholarships granted to the boys to pursue their studies further. And, emphasis was laid in promoting education amongst boys so that they may be able to earn good enough for their living.³⁰ There is no mention about educating girls or even promoting awareness about girls' education. The condition of girls' education can be understood by the report submitted to the Political Agent Kota, dated 1899, Ajmer about the condition of girls' schools:

Stating about two schools in the city, one in Rampura mohulla with 23 names on rolls and other for the mohameddians with the nominal attendance of 32, were established five years ago and were in adverse condition. The result of these schools has been unsatisfactory which was similar to that in Ajmere, with very few girls attending the schools that too with irregularity; as soon

²⁹ Mahakma khas, Jodhpur, J/14/C/ 1936-37, Part I, Education File, C/3/2/26, January 1932 and 20th October 1936 cited in Santosh Yadav, *Unnisavi Beesawi Shatabdi*, op. cit., 125. Also refer Appendix for detail.

³⁰ Mahakma khas, English office, Basta No. 5, F. No. 4/9-6, *Education Miscellaneous*, RSAK.

as they commence to make some definite progress they have to leave to get married. In the Rampura School and in the Mohamedan School 11 children respectively can read books of varying degrees of difficulty and a few of them can write a little dictation. No Airthmatic at all is attempted in the Mohamedan School and very little in the other with 3 children reached the stage of multiplication. Unless some determined effort is made by some leading people in Kotah, and by their example and influence the teaching of girls be made fashionable nothing can for many years to come be expected. But if the Raj would import a competitive Pandita from Benaras at the cost of 50/- p.m. and provide a good house (as in Bikaner) the prospect of female education would brighten and in the course of little time much good work might be done. The present system I consider to be fruitless.³¹

A change was visible for the middle class students who were encouraged to carry with their study the Director of Education wrote letters between the year 1907-1912 to the Diwan of Kota for the sanction of the boarding house near the High School so that the normal class students could

³¹ Mahakma khas, English office, Basta No. 5, F. No. 4/9-6, *Education Miscellaneous*, RSAK.

easily and conveniently attend the school.³² An annual report on education for the years 1912-1917, some interesting points worth mentioning:

1911-12: there were 4 girls school and later one more was added and there was a girls' school at Baran in charge of a Kazi Faiz Mohammad but it got closed with his death; was not re-opened. Hindu population demanded girls' school for which Pandita Nand Kanwari was sent to Baran to open girls' school. Her place was filled in by Parvati bai who was the monitor at the Maharani School.

1912-13: of the 72 schools in the state 67 were of boys and 5 were of girls, in the Kota city 9 boys' school and 4 girls school. The status of boys appeared for the Matriculation exams between 1910 and 1913 are shown in the table:

Table 1:
No. of Boys for the matriculation exams

| Year | boys for the matriculation exams | No. of Passes | | | | | No. of Failures |
|---------|----------------------------------|---------------|----|-----|-------|----|-----------------|
| | | I | II | III | Total | % | |
| 1910-11 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 75 | 1 |
| 1911-12 | 5 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 80 | 1 |
| 1912-13 | 9 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 5 | 56 | 4 |
| Total | 18 | 0 | 3 | 9 | 12 | | 6 |

Source: Mahakama khas, English office, *Annual Reports (1912-17) on Education*, Basta No. 6, F. No. 4/60-2, RSAK.

The Muslim community tried hard for the betterment for the education of their children but Kota State did not paid attention on their demands. The

³² Mahakama khas, English office, Basta No. 6, F. No. 4/44, *Opening of a hostel or a boarding house attached to the high school*, RSAK

donations once promised for the Mohammedan School was not provided to them for a very long time.³³ Hence, Khan Bahadur Mir Madar Ali applied to this department for including the Mohammedan school in the list of the State Schools, the application of which was forwarded to the *Mhakama Khas*, which was rejected on the 14th May, 1913 on the grounds that the State does not want to establish any denominational school. However, it was ordered that one Urdu and one Persian knowing female teacher may be appointed in Her Highness Maharaniji Sahiba's Girls' School, to impart lectures to the students who wish to study these languages.³⁴ It reveals the prejudice ruler had for people belonging to the other communities and castes. It would have been much praiseworthy act, if the school would have been sanctioned for the students of the Muslim community. One needs to keep in mind that people in the nineteenth-twentieth century were adapting to change slowly, as a ruler of the state there should have been some sort of resort for the citizens who wished to accept change.

Nothing much spectacular happened in the field of education between 1913 and 1915 but one interesting thing to note was the scholarship of 5,000/- awarded to the widows studying in the Maharani school granted by the Shri Jadeja ji Sahiba.³⁵ To encourage girls' education the Maharani Sahiba had

³³ Mahakama khas, English office, *Annual Reports (1912-17) on Education*, Basta No. 6, F. No. 4/60-2, RSAK.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Mahakama khas, English office, *Annual Reports (1912-17) on Education*, Basta No. 6, F. No. 4/60-2, RSAK.

come up with the suggestion of starting a girls' school which was started by donating the sum 25,000/-.³⁶

For the 'new woman' although education was important but to administer it through English language was a challenge the central space for these women was still home. There was a fear of displacing and devaluing this pure social space. The *Bhadramahila* were educated through their mother tongue. It helped them to associate themselves through this changing time without disturbing the sanctity of the 'inner sanctum'. But this exposure enabled them to carve out their own space which helped them to achieve freedom.³⁷ As far as the Hadauti women are concerned they could not reach even to that level of attaining personal goal of moving higher in the hierarchy.

An elite Hadauti woman behaved like a Bengali *Bhadramahila* of the nineteenth century. For a Bengali middle-class woman education inculcated in them ideas of virtue which was needed to run the house as per the need of the changing times, self-discipline, hygiene, cleanliness etc. but a low class woman was away from it. She either could hardly study because she was also an earning member which was more important than her own study. In Hadauti not just elite but even the educated upper caste middle-class women did not venture out of the inner space provided to them. They also professed the nationalist ideology of attaining knowledge just to be able to appreciate their husbands and other men in the family. An educated woman was also a

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Partha Chatterjee, Colonialism, Nationalism, and Colonized Women, *American Ethnologists*, op. cit., 622-633.

status symbol for a man of mid-nineteenth century, a way to exhibit himself as 'modern'. But the incorporation of education in emancipation of women was absent both by the British as well as Nationalists.³⁸

A Nationalist reformer Dayanand Saraswati tried to awaken the people of Rajasthan by enlightening them to stand against the corrupt rulers and the feudal lords. In north India he visited various Rajputana States of Karauli, Bharatpur, Dhaulpur, Jaipur, Udaipur, Jodhpur, Shahpura, Kishangarh, Kushalgarh and *thikanas* of Bagru, Dudu, Sardargarh, Achrol, Banera, Royat and also visited Nimbaheda, Haripura, Byawar, Bhilwara, Pali, Naseerabad chhavni, Pushkar and Ajmer-Merwara etc. between 1863 and 1883. He gave speeches and interacted with people to understand the true relation of ruler and citizens and asked the feudal lords to serve the people and not to exploit them and made people aware about their rights and duties especially for their women, guided them to read Manusmriti and professed the 'right kind of marriage'.³⁹

In April 1926 Vanita Ashram was established to shelter around 300 abandoned women between 1928 and 1936. Some were remarried and all of

³⁸ See Appendix for the Economic level, the livelihood patterns of women of Hadauti refer to Table No. 10 Table showing the number of public servants in various departments in 1951, Bundi district; Table No. 11 Table showing the economic trends livelihood pattern, Bundi district, 1961 Census; Table 12 Table showing workers and non-workers according to main activity classified by sex and age-group in Bundi District, 1971 Census; Table 24 Table Showing Economic Status through Industrial Classification by Sex and Class of Workers in Non-Household Industry, 1961 Census; Table 25 Table showing number of workers male, female in Public Administration, 1961 Census; Table 26 Table showing livelihood pattern, Kota districts, 1971 Census and Table 27 Table showing the livelihood pattern in Kota District and Rajasthan State, 1971 Census.

³⁹ Santosh Yadav, op. cit., p. 134

them were trained to become self-employed. To improve the condition of women one 'Sharda' Mahila Arya Pratinidhi Sabha' was established with many women taking responsibilities and opening girls' schools in various states of Rajasthan based on the Vedic ideology.⁴⁰ There were various kinds of reforms attempted by the people in the form of indigenous community organizations which tried to remove evil practices within their community. But mostly the reforms were related to marriage and heavy expenses incurred by the people in it. With the passage of time the feudal lords and other high class Rajputs as well as Charans could not afford lavish marriages.⁴¹ Rules for remarriages were formed for the widower men but not for the widow. Widow Remarriage was not allowed in Brahman, Mahajan a few other communities but a man was allowed to remarry only if the first wife had died or was allowed a second marriage even when the first wife was alive but who failed to bear a child.⁴²

Colonel Walter was the resident of Mewar in 1879-81, 1882-85 and 1886-87 who took the opportunity and established 'Walterkrit Hitakarini Sabha' in 1888 bringing all the princely States together. It was one organization which included the charan and feudal lords of the Rajput

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ The 'Desh Hitaishini Sabha' was formed in 1877 by the Maharana of Udaipur with his 32 feudal lords and other officials. They tried to make some rules for the Kshatriya community who were being exploited with many rites and rituals associated with marriage. It was declared that the total expense incurred on the family should be based on the annual income of the family. Emphasis was laid on to ban giving *tyag* money, and for those who are comfortable to give *tyag* money shall be permitted only to spend 35% from their annual income on the marriage out of which 10% shall be *tyag* and rest 25% must be spend in the other rites and rituals of the marriage.

⁴² Santosh Yadav, *Unnisavi Beesawi Shatabdi*, 138.

community⁴³. It was inspired by the Desh Hitaishini Sabha of Udaipur that was established ten years before in Udaipur. There were many reforms in the Walterkrit Sabha which emphasized controlling unnecessary expenditure on *nukta* (food after death) and more so of *tyag*⁴⁴.

The narrow and limited reforms sought were governed by the emerging financial reality. There was nothing more to it. If they had broader social concerns evolved there would have been other provisions like girls' education, ban on purdah, widow remarriage polygamy etc. The rulers Rajputana although organizing the Hitkarini Sabha were not interested in expanding the horizon of reforms.

The nationalists used various issues related to women as a reason to criticize the role of British in India. The formations of community organizations resulted in pressurizing the rulers to take serious steps to amend the system of marriage. Consequently almost all the states took actions to ban unmatched marriages especially of a maiden with an old man. Bharatpur made the Social Security Act and Kota named it Child marriage Act 1926 setting 15 years for boy and 11 for girls'. Mostly this was the age limit in all the states except Alwar's Social Improvement Act, 1927 where groom was 18 and bride was 13, Jodhpur's Marwar marriage Act, 1930 keeping 16 for the groom and 12 for the bride. Jhalawar named it *Kanun taiyan umar shadi* in 1931 making 18 years for the boy and 14 years for the girl.

⁴³ Ibid., 140.

⁴⁴ *Walterkrit Hitkarini Sabha* RSAB.

Dungarpur's Child and Unmatched Marriage Act, 1935, Shahpura's Child Marriage Prohibition Act, 1939, Udaipur's The Undesirable Marriage Prohibition Act, 1941 and Jaipur State's The Child marriage Restrict Act, 1945 kept the age for the groom to 18 whereas 15, 12, 13 and 14 for the bride respectively.⁴⁵

Continuing the established practice widow remarriage was not permitted even in the twentieth century and had to face stern action. When in Jodhpur state one guru Laxminath went against the social prejudice and married a widow he was killed. In Alwar ban was imposed on the Sanatani Hindus who practiced widow remarriage as the Kota state stopped the widow account. A large number of caste and communities among whom the practice of widow remarriage was prevalent were not stopped but states like Kota, Udaipur, Jaipur and Jodhpur used to levy taxes- *Natalag*, *Natakagli* and *Natachauthan* on the *Nata*, *Garecha*, *Kareva* etc. Jodhpur used to charge one rupee while Kota state had an exorbitant charge of used to charge 5 rupees on every widow remarriage.⁴⁶ Many important aspects were still left untouched but it ignited the spark of women liberation movement which was still a longer way to go. Modernization should not just be understood in terms of the element that marks 'growth' in terms of facilities or technological advancements etc. it is more than this. It has to do with the intellectuality of

⁴⁵ Santosh Yada, *Unnisavi Beesawi Shatabdi*, 151.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 154.

being sensitive towards other members of the society which contributes equally in maintaining its balance.

Rajasthan has been identified with evils of Sati, female infanticide, purdah etc. but quite often it is forgotten that these customs were popular amongst the high, upper castes of the society. How far and in what ways the low castes responded to the change is a matter of interest to delve into. There was a wave of reformers; teachers and saints who highlighted the negativities of the social evils. In the nineteenth century they tried to revive some positive facets of the Indian culture that marked 'Hindu reformation movement'. The role of Christian missionaries is very crucial in this regard as they worked against the established Hindu social prejudices. There was Ramkrishna Mission and Arya Samaj which worked in this direction in different parts of the country. Maharaja Bhawani Singh of Jhalawar (1899-1939) became the first among the native rulers to allow Harijans to enter into a state temple as he also appointed them in several posts.⁴⁷ There was a gradual rise of consciousness amongst the untouchables in India leading though to an uneven development in their movement.

The untouchable movement did not begin till late nineteenth century in the princely states although there were small movements which could not transform into a large movement as was the case in the Bombay presidency. The movement remained more or less confined to the urban literate

⁴⁷ Shyamlal, *Ambedkar and Dalit Movement: Special Reference to Rajasthan*, Jaipur, Rawat Publications, 2008, 2, 4.

untouchables in the towns of Rajputana. The sole purpose was improving their socio-economic condition with the intention of attaining support from the Congress in the national movement; it did not brought any radical change.⁴⁸ There was no notable movement of any kind among the untouchables in the princely India till 1880.⁴⁹ It is only from 1935 onwards when it got some momentum.

Arya Samaj was able to bridge the gap between the learned upper caste Hindus and illiterate low caste Hindus highlighting the idea of oneness in the eyes of God. They established schools in some states of Rajputana for the untouchables like Chamars, Bhangis, Bairwas and others in Jaipur, Jodhpur, Jhalawar, Udaipur and Bandikui. Arya Samaj started schools for untouchable girls in Rajputana without charging fee and also admitted untouchable students in Anglo-Vedic educational institutions.⁵⁰ Education provided new ideas and values such as equality among the untouchables.

The purpose of the Arya Samajis was to remove the Islamic influence from the untouchables and hence tried to reform their socio-cultural and economic conditions through the process of 'sanskritization'. This way of work was not contested and opposed even by the high caste upper class

⁴⁸ In 1935 a number of social activists from few untouchable communities were able to unite on a social platform and create social organizations for e.g. Meghwal Jati Sudhar Mandal in 1935 and Safai Mazdoor Union in 1942, *Ibid.*, 29.

⁴⁹ Awakening among the untouchables began first in 1881-82 when Dayanand Saraswati established Arya Samaj and in 1920 when Vijay Singh 'Pathik' established Rajasthan Seva Sangh and in 1932 established Rajputana Harijan Seva Sangh. The third phase was when various caste-based organizations were formed from 1935, *Ibid.*, 31.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 34.

Hindus; their approach in the princely states was to impress upon the ruler to implement the idea of equality among the low castes. The contribution of Christian missionaries and Rajasthan Sewa Sangh is notable as both tried to awaken the social consciousness amongst the untouchables in their own ways.⁵¹

The role of Christian missionaries can not be negated in reforming the society in their own manner, Bishop Fortunatus Henri Caumont (1871-1930) extensively worked since 1897 in Rajasthan.⁵² He was born to Mosieur Salvat and Madame Pauline Caumont in France, on December, 10, 1871, became priest in 1896 and came to India in 1897 to serve the people of Rajputana. He realized that only women could reach out to them and so, when approached by a band of committed and enthusiastic young women desiring to give themselves to the service of God, he founded the Congregation of the Mission Sisters of Ajmer on April 26, 1911 and took it upon himself to take care of their spiritual growth.

In 1913, Fr. Henri Caumont was made the first Bishop of Ajmer. A great visionary and in every sense a prophet, he saw the need for medical aid, mainly for the tribals and women. He had Sister Mary Soares as Doctor in 1917 and other Sister trained as nurses in order to bring them healing touch of Jesus. Bishop Henri Caumont aim was to liberate women through education and empower them to take their rightful place in society. He first started a

⁵¹ Shyamlal, *Ambedkar and Dalit Movement*, op. cit. 34

⁵² (Magazine) *The Mission of a 100 years*, Mission Sisiters House, Mirshali, Ajmer, Rajasthan, 2011, 4.

school St. Imelda's School for poor girls and by 1913 an orphanage for unwanted and unloved girls was opened. Moved by the plight of women and girls veiled in *purdah* who were denied education, he set up the Sophia School on May 16, 1919 and for the oppressed and disadvantaged many primary schools and dispensaries in nearby villages were established. He also encouraged the Sisters to care for the *Rawats* and the *Bhils* in distant villages.

In 1911 on laying the foundation of the Mission of Sisters of Ajmer, Bishop Caumont requested the Congregation of St. Mary of the Angels of France for a helper, his own sister Mother Mary Matilda was appointed in February 1911 to collaborate with him.⁵³ She was born on December, 13, 1880 in France; their mother too became a nun at the age of 46. The Congregation of the Mission Sisters of Ajmer was established on the April 26th, 1911 in what presently is known as St. Francis Hospital, Ajmer. Mother Mary Tarcisius was inspired by Mary Matilda to work for uplifting the women in Rajputana. She was the first principal of the school meant exclusively for girls named Sophia, which means wisdom.

Mother Mary Matilda was one of the first ladies to work for the education of women in Ajmer. She was honoured with the title, 'The First Lady in the Cause of Women's Education,' and was appointed Girl Guide Commissioner in 1936. Later at the request of the Education Department, she was accepted to be Inspector of Girls' High Schools in Ajmer-Merwara. As the

⁵³ (Magazine) *The Mission of a 100 years*, op. cit., 5.

head of the Congregation of the Mission of Sisters of Ajmer Mary Matilda opened houses in the villages with the welfare centre to attend to the medical needs of the poor and also Hindi medium schools to educate the children of the rural and tribal areas.

The Mission of Sisters of Ajmer is an Indian Congregation of Religious Sisters working to uplift the girls and less fortunate people in urban and rural areas.⁵⁴ They have constantly been working in helping people overcome their problems let that be in education, shelter, health, women upliftment they have vowed to work for the benefit of the mass. They are spread up to Kerala with institutions spread in almost all the districts of Rajasthan from Ajmer, Jaipur, Kota, Jodhpur, Bikaner and other States of India in Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Haryana, Maharashtra, Goa, Karnataka and Kerala.⁵⁵

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar was a visionary who tried to radicalize the low castes in India by advocating and pleading separate electorate for the Dalits. He was able to realize that there are many reformers who talk about equality but hardly anyone was ready to radically bring about the change in the social order. He was acerbic on Gandhians:

The Mahatma is not an immortal person, nor the Congress assuming that it is not a non-violent force and is not to have an abiding existence. There have been many Mahatmas in India

⁵⁴ (Magazine) *The Mission of a 100 years*, op. cit., 6.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 11.

whose sole object was to remove untouchability and to elevate and absorb the depressed classes, but every one of them failed in his mission. Mahatmas have come and gone. But the untouchables have remained as untouchables.⁵⁶

He wanted concrete steps in improving the status of the low castes and vehemently questioned the mindset of the upper caste people. The Harijans were awakening now and their educated youth along with some educated urban untouchables and some Hindu social activists worked all across Rajasthan in mobilizing their status within the social hierarchy; their struggle for a respectable life continuous even today. But the role of *Bhagats* and *pirs* in the past was crucial in inculcating in them the feeling of dignity.

Rajasthan possess a rich tradition of popular saints and preachers century like Gogaji, Tejaji, Ramdevji, Devnarayanji, Harbhujji, Santi Peepa and Ramanandi Sampradaya.⁵⁷ All of them tried to preach the idea of equality and through spirituality tried breaking the bias of social hierarchy. Rajasthan experienced a wave of bhakti movement in the 14th century in time with magnificent preachers all across the sub-continent, many of whom came from the artisan and untouchable background; Namdev was a *Chhipa*, Sadna a *Kasai*, Raidas a *Chamar*, Dhanna a Jat while Kabir was admired as long as he preached equality between both Hindus and Muslims but was criticized as

⁵⁶ Shyamlal, *Ambedkar and Dalit Movement*, op. cit., 41.

⁵⁷ Omkar Nath Chaturvedi, *Sant Prampara aur Sahitya*, Jaipur, Jaipur Publishing House, 1999, xvii.

soon as he began highlighting the negativities present in both the religions like the caste system of the Hindus.

Bhakti movement offered the low caste people space in the religious and spiritual life which had been dominated by the upper castes of the society. Jambhoji the founder of the Bishnoi community was a Pawar whose preaching came to be formulated as 29 codes of conduct which his followers had to practice. Similarly even Jasnath a Jat also prescribed codes for his followers. Both preached a simple life by taking care of hygiene, practicing religious rites every day, eating clean and cooked food, not indulging in flesh trade, not harming the nature by cutting and burning trees and protecting animals from getting slaughtered and not indulging in any kind of addiction.⁵⁸

Although women faced discrimination in every section of the society yet their condition was better as compared to twice born women. In some of these popular traditions they were allowed to be preachers. The Charandasi had two female preachers Sahjobai and Dayabai. They were probably ordained because they were cousin sisters of Charandas but their acceptance by other followers shows a different treatment.⁵⁹ Later two more women poets namely Khushlabai and another Jan Begam also emerged in these Bhakti movement. These early women preachers and poets although followed

⁵⁸ Omkar Nath Chaturvedi, *Sant Prampara*, op. cit., 55, 63.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 173-73.

the established tradition founded by men of their community, their visibility as women is important for Rajasthani saints.

The tendency of modernizing society can be seen in the preaching of the *sants* of Rajasthan; in their idea of breaking the caste system, refuting unnecessary rituals existing in the Brahmanical Hindu tradition like fasting, idol worship and feeding Brahmins. They advocated dignity of labour by stressing earning their livelihood through hard work. They also stressed the usefulness of discussion and positive thinking for becoming a better person. Even an unlearned girl or a prostitute could find her path of salvation through enlightenment.⁶⁰

In the context of Hadauti, 'modernization' was far away from women in general looking from women's perspective the condition was far better for women of the low caste than the women from the upper castes. The latter were subjected to rigorous control while the former participated in the economic activities of their family. Nonetheless, the overall status of women in Hadauti has been poor in almost all aspects from health, education, sex ratio, status of widow and highest number of child marriages etc.⁶¹

There is need to differentiate the western perception of modernity from the Indian. The Indian national movement has been dealt from the point of

⁶⁰ *Maans bhashe madira peeve, wah to agam agadh. Jo aise karni kare, sundar soi sadh. Sundarsabahi so bhili, ashan kumara. Vaishya firi pativorat liyo, bhayi suhagan naari. Sundar parvorat uddi gaye rui rahi sthir hoi. Baav bajyo ihi bhaati ko, kyoun kari bhaane koi. Ibid., 374.*

⁶¹ See Appendix for various data available about men and women divide in Hadauti covering different aspects.

view of the elite urban class whereas the role of the regional preachers and activists in the country side has largely been ignored in the established historiography. The untouchables have their own history which is getting some attention by the contemporary scholars,⁶² but even their women are still marginalized in such attempts. They need to be studied with different perception, with empathy and concern.

⁶² For detailed study also see Manu Bhagvan and Anne Feldhaus ed., *Claiming Power from Below: Dalits and the Subaltern Questions in India* and *Speaking Truth to Power: Religion, Caste and the Subaltern Question in India*, Delhi, Oxford University Press, 2008; Waman Nimbalkar, 'Caste' translated by Graham Smith, Mulk Raj Anand and Eleanor Zelliot, eds., *An Anthology of Dalit Literature (Poems)*, New Delhi, Gyan Publishing House, 1992; Eleanor Zelliot, *From Untouchable to Dalit: Essays on the Ambedkar Movement*, New Delhi, Manohar, 1992; Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Post Colonial Histories*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1993; Rajni Kothari, 'Rise of the Dalits and the Renewed Debate on Caste,' ed. Partha Chatterjee, *State and Politics in India*, New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1997, 439-58.