

CHAPTER V

EPILOGUE

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There are references to the Jain community in South India right from third century B.C.; references to their settlement in Kolhapur region increase from 11th century A.D. They were patronized generously by the various dynasties such as Shilahars, Rashtrakutas, etc., which controlled this region from time to time.¹ The majority of Jains in Kolhapur region are Digambers and agriculture was their main profession.² The Jain Community was distributed in both rural and urban parts of Kolhapur. Though Jains engaged in trade and commerce, resided in towns like Kolhapur, Ichalkaranji, Jaysingpur, etc., those engaged in farming were distributed in the eastern part of Shirol, Hatkanan-gale and Karveer talukas. In 1901, Jains formed 4.55 percent of population of the State.³ However, the literacy percentage of Jain community of Kolhapur was far less than that of Jain community of Ahmedabad and Surat in Gujarat and Poona and Nasik in Maharashtra.⁴

The poor literacy of the Jain community may be traced to certain geographical, economic factors. The community was chained to certain deep-rooted, outdated social practices and customs. The Jain woman formed 48.55 percent of population of this community.⁵ In Jain philosophical and religious system, woman enjoys a greater degree of liberty and freedom; but in reality, she was an unfortunate victim of the social orthodoxy and conservatism of the Jain community that looked down upon education of its womenfolk. Educating her meant bringing the

curse on the family.⁶

Thus, her freedom was curtailed to a great degree. Besides, a majority of Jains, as they were engaged in agriculture, were not economically well-off and those engaged in other professions shun modernization and stuck to the traditional methods, satisfied with their moderate income.⁷ As such, the Jain community in the region of Kolhapur remained backward in comparison to the Jain community of other places.

The British rule broadened the base of education in India, but, more importantly, in the Princely State of Kolhapur, started a strong mass movement for social change in the last decades of the 19th century. Social equality and the welfare of the non-Brahmin backward communities were the main aims of the movement. Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj and his successor Chhatrapati Rajaram Maharaj were the main forces behind it. The major impact of the social movement was felt on the educational life. The doors of education were thrown open to all and thus, major change assured in the Princely State of Kolhapur.

At the end of the last century, the female literacy rate in the Jain community was 0.2 percent, whereas none of them knew English.⁸ Because of the socio-educational development in Kolhapur State and development within the community itself, the Jain women rose slowly and steadily from their pathetic conditions in the next fifty years.

In Jain community itself was emerging into consciousness regarding the need for education. Female education in

particular and its usefulness. Within the Jain community were slowly surfacing the liberal forces which helped to create an awakening within the community.

Mr. A. B. Latthe exactly diagnosed that the backwardness of the non-Brahmin communities lay in their ignorance and believed that only education would bring about social and religious reforms and would also enable them to fight for their political rights.⁹ He was for compulsory primary education for masses. For him, education involved all the aspects of life, vocational, religious and physical. His stress was on the female education in particular.¹⁰ Latthe was a prominent member of the Jain community of this region. He was a law graduate. He too worked in various capacities such as Education Inspector. Thus, his ideas were practical and they influenced the Jain community.

Seth Manikchand Javeri, on the other hand, was not from this region, but he was closely associated with the female education in this region.¹¹ He was a staunch advocate of the female education as he could not bear widowhood of his daughter, Pandita Maganbai. He defied orthodox elements and openly worked for the welfare of the widows.¹² He opposed child-marriages. His widowed daughter, Pandita Maganbai, strongly maintained that it was primarily the responsibility of men to educate their womenfolk. They should provide for girls hostels and schools. She would advise the men to spend the money meant for marriages of their daughters on their education.¹³ She appealed to the widows to break the shackles of the past and educate themselves and thereby be useful to the society. Like her,

Dharmachandrika Kakubai, who was also a victim of widowhood in an early age, devoted herself to the welfare of women. She also strongly advocated female education. Kalantre Akka was also a widow and she worked tirelessly with a great zeal for the upliftment and liberation of the Jain women.

There were not only Jain men who were trying to create an awakening among their community, but women too came forward to contribute their mite. The women who had suffered the widowhood, provided the spark. The urge came from within, their spirited attack on orthodoxy and conservatism of the community must have called for a great degree of courage and sense of purpose.

The Dakshin Maharashtra Jain Sabha provided a platform for the fiery Jain men and women who were bent on pulling out their community from the depths of the backwardness. A special wing for women was set up. The women participated in various meetings held from time to time in increasing numbers, taking up the issues that concerned them.¹⁴

The newspapers took up the cause of female education. The press played an important role in promoting it. Prominent Jain social workers such as Seth Hirachand Nemchand Doshi, Seth Manikchand Hirachand Javeri, Shri Balasaheb Patil and others started their own periodicals and championed the cause of female education through them. Articles on female education, on its promotion, on its nature were regularly published in them. Though Seth Hirachand Nemchand Doshi and Seth Manikchand Hirachand

Javeri were not the natives of Kolhapur, yet they were associated with the working of the Dakshin Maharashtra Jain Sabha and the promotion of Jain women education in this region. 'Jain Bodhak', 'Jainmitra' and 'Satyavadi' were the important periodicals which directly contributed to the promotion of the female education. Balasaheb Patil, the founder-publisher of 'Satyavadi' was, perhaps, the first of his times, to have started a special women's section, managed by a woman editor, in his periodical.¹⁵ It was with a view to have the women discuss the problems of women from the viewpoint of women. As a result, various issues affecting the Jain women, including education, were discussed in those columns. The regular publication of such articles had its impact and effect on the Jain community. It is only after having read one such letter by an anonymous Jain woman published in one of the issues of the 'Jain Bodhak' that one Manikchand Kaluskar of Phaltan was moved enough by the pathetic condition of the Jain women to offer voluntarily a monthly scholarship of Rs.5/- to any Jain women interested in education.¹⁶

These Jain periodicals had a regular readership from Kolhapur region and naturally, various articles published in them had positive effects on them.

Chh.Shahu Maharaj and his son, and successor, Chh.Rajaram Maharaj also encouraged and promoted education in this State. During their reign, a number of schools and high-schools were opened. They were also the promoters of female education. Chh.Shahu Maharaj helped the cause of the female education in the Jain community indirectly by supporting the work of

the Dakshin Maharashtra Jain Sabha, which was instrumental in the promotion of the female education.¹⁷ He helped to establish the Jain Boarding at Kolhapur. He also made a grant of Rs. 300/- per annum to the Dakshin Maharashtra Jain Sabha.¹⁸ The Jain community faced financial problems in promoting the female education. Mr.A.B.Latthe played a very important role in raising the funds for the establishment of Shravikashram to promote the cause of the female education.¹⁹ Donations were received by the Dakshin Maharashtra Jain Sabha from time to time. Danvir Manikchand Hirachand Javeri, at one instance, donated a substantial sum of Rs.10,000/- to the Sabha.²⁰ Members of other communities also came forward to contribute their money.²¹ Next to the facilities such as hostels, incentives were also offered so as to attract the girls to education. Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj, Chhatrapati Rajaram Maharaj offered scholarships and incentives and many Jain women were benefitted from them.²²

In spite of these efforts, the promotion of female education proved to be a restricted one. It is seen that most of the financial help extended by the Jains was not from the native Jain community, but from the Jains residing outside the Kolhapur State. The efforts of the local Jain community in promoting the female education did not match with that of the Jain community residing at other places. For instance, Shravikashrams were set up at various places such as Bombay, Sangli and also at Kolhapur for promoting the female education.

Pandita Maganbai, a resident of Bombay, donated a sum of Rs.300/- to the Shravikashram at Kolhapur, but on

the other hand, she had collected a very substantial sum of Rs.91,933/- for the development of Shravikashram in Bombay.²³

However, the Shravikashram in Bombay and at Sangli flourished in the course of time, but the one at Kolhapur had to be closed down because of the financial problems and the lack of workers.²⁴

Such and similar incidents indicate comparative lack of dedication and motivation on the part of the Jain community of Kolhapur for the promotion of the female education.

The literacy rate of the Jain women showed a marked rise from 1911 to 1931. It rose from three percent to eleven percent whereas for the same period, the female literacy in Kolhapur city rose from 3.4 percent to 11.8 percent.²⁵ So, compared to the literacy rate of other communities, except the Brahmin community the rise of the female literacy in the Jain community was substantial. The degree of rise in literacy was higher among female than males in the Jain community.

Two decades later in 1931, the male literacy came down by seventeen percent whereas the female literacy rose by five percent.²⁶ A similar pattern may be detected in the comparative progress of the primary education in the Jain community with respect to the total progress of the primary education in Kolhapur State. In 1930, the Jain boys formed only 2.8 percent of total number of primary school boys whereas the Jain girls accounted for 7.6 percent of the total number of the primary school girls.²⁷ In 1933, the Jain boys accounted for only 2.4 percent whereas the Jain girls formed about six percent of total number of girl students.²⁸ In 1935, the Jain boys formed eight

percent of the total strength of the primary boys, whereas Jain girls formed twenty percent of the total strength of the primary school girls in Kolhapur State.²⁹ The percentage of the Jain girls related to the total strength of the primary school girls was always more than double the percentage of the Jain boys related to the total strength of the primary students in the State.

In the field of the secondary education, only twentytwo Jain girls seem to have taken secondary education at the co-educational schools for the entire period from 1901 to 1949.³⁰ They preferred girls schools to the co-educational schools. However, even in the girls schools, their performance remained moderate. There were only four girls schools in Kolhapur district and the State. The maximum strength of the Jain girls recorded for the whole period at any of these schools at any given year was twelve. It was at Tararani Girls High School in 1948 and the Princess Padmaraje Girls High School in 1949 each.³¹ In terms of percentage of the strength of the Jain girls to that of overall strength of the girl students was just above ten. Otherwise, the percentage of the Jain girls at any of the school fluctuated between zero to six. On the other hand, the percentage of the Brahmin and Maratha girls was always between fortyfive and sixty percent in any one of those schools in any given year. So, the Jain girls lagged behind the Brahmin and Maratha girls in the field of secondary education. So far the college education is concerned, only eleven Jain girls seem to have taken it between 1931-49.³² Thus, it may be seen that in the first half of

this century in the district of Kolhapur, in the matter of the female literacy, the Jain community stood next only to the Brahmin community. On the other hand, overall female literacy in this region for the said period rose by just five percent. The female literacy in the Jain community rose by eleven percent.

The rise in the female literacy was due to various favourable factors within and outside the community. Yet, the factors that held a Jain woman back were from within the community itself.

Of the women interviewed, about sixty percent of them maintained that because of family problems such as early marriage and opposition of parents, they could not complete their primary level education.

The other factors that slowed down the growth of the female education were the financial problems and a lack of facilities at the village level. Though the growth of the female education was moderate, yet the situation was changing slowly and steadily.

On having asked to compare their conditions with those of the present, fiftysix percent of them observed, "the orthodoxy and the conservatism of our time is totally missing. Today, a Jain man understands the importance of the female education; so does a Jain woman. As a result, education has become the only aim ... the kind of financial independence education gives to a woman today could not have been imaged in our time". Similarly, three percent of the believed that

"the Jain girls are not taking the full benefits of the facilities available today; they should not commit this mistake".

Similarly, the spread of education, though a limited one, created a consciousness about it among those who received it. Of the women interviewed, nearly fifty percent of them regarding education as a must for their daughters and an equal percentage believed that the educated women should help others to take education. Financial independence is a strong motivation for taking education, felt nearly forty percent of them.

Thus, in short, it may be seen that the Jain women, in the beginning of the century, had to struggle with a number of obstacles in the path of education, such as opposition to female education within the community itself, early and child marriages, poor finance, etc. However, with the encouragement and support from within the community and from without, she slowly overcame those obstacles. During the first half of this century, though the degree of the spread of education within the Jain community was comparatively rather slow, yet it proved to be much meaningful and useful as it created in them self-confidence and a strong motivation for financial independence for educating their daughters.

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नम्र विनंती.

मी (सौ. शकुजा विकास बोट, सांगली) शिवाजी विद्यापीठ, कोल्हापूर येथे इतिहास विभागात एम. फिल. करीत आहे. माझ्या शोध प्रबंधाचा विषय "सन १९०१ ते १९४९ या काळातील कोल्हापूर जिल्ह्यातील जैन स्त्री शिक्षणाचा आढावा" त्यासाठी मी कोल्हापूर जिल्ह्यातील सन १९०१ ते १९४९ या काळात शिक्षण घेतलेल्या जैन स्त्रियांची माहिती गोळा करीत आहे. तरी या पत्राच्या शीर्षक जोडलेली जी "प्रश्नावली" आहे ती भरून देऊन आपण मला या शोध - प्रबंधाचा कार्यत सहकार्य करावे ही नम्र विनंती.

आपली शिवाजी



[सौ. शकुजा विकास बोट]

प्रश्नावली

अ) सामान्य माहिती :

१) संपूर्ण नांव [सध्याचे] :

२) संपूर्ण नांव [जन्मापूर्वीचे] :

३) सध्याचे वय जन्म तारीख -

शिक्षण -

४) लिंग : [स्त्री] :

शोधचे नांव -

५) व्यवसाय :

६) सध्याचा पत्ता :

ब) विशेष माहिती :

७) कौटुंबिक पार्श्वभूमी -

परातील कोण व्यक्ती शिक्षिल्या होत्या ? त्यांच्याशी तुमचे नाते -

नांव

नाते

शैक्षणिक अर्हता

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सुचना : आपणांस लागू असणा-या खालील अडचणींवर [✓] करावी.

८) शिक्षण घेत असताना आपणांस कोणत्या अडचणी आल्या ?

आर्थिक अडचणी / इतर / कौटुंबिक अडचणी / विशेष.

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