

ИСТОРИЧЕСКИЕ НАУКИ

THE EDUCATION OF GIRLS IN THE BOMBAY PRESIDENCY IN IN THE FIRST HALF OF THE 19TH CENTURY

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АННОТАЦИЯ

Цель данного исследования - проследить начальный этап развития женского образования в Бомбейском президентстве (Махараштра, Индия). Первые школы для девочек открывали в основном миссионерские общества Великобритании и США. Из их отчетов можно проследить финансирование, национальный состав школ, методику преподавания, а также реакцию на нововведения традиционного индийского общества. Материалы статьи могут быть использованы при разработке социологических и исторических исследований и подготовке учебных курсов.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to trace the initial stage of development of women's education in the Bombay presidency (Maharashtra, India). The first girls' schools were opened mainly by the missionary societies of the United Kingdom and the United States. From their reports it is possible to trace the funding, the national composition of the schools, teaching methods, as well as the response to the innovations of traditional Indian society. The materials of the article can be used in the development of sociological and historical research and training courses.

Ключевые слова: образование, миссионеры, реформа, Ост-Индская компания, Бомбейское президентство.

Keywords: education, missionaries, reform, East India company, Bombay presidency.

India is one of the few countries in the East where women can easily get an education and take an active part in the political life of the country. The prerequisites for this equality were laid during the British rule, as evidenced by numerous archival materials. Purpose of this study is to outline the initial stage of development of women's education in the Bombay presidency, basing on the reports of charitable organizations.

With the advent of British rule, India entered a new era of modernization. Foreigners introduced among other things education for girls. Later, in the first half of the 19th century more progressive Indians were encouraged by their efforts to open schools for girls. In the Bombay Presidency (under the leadership of the East India Company) the first such institution was Bombay Education Society. It was opened in 1815 by the exertions of Archdeacon Barnes, the first Archdeacon of Bombay. Originally, the purpose of this institution was based on teaching of European children (both boys and girls) in the principles of Christianity and imparting to them such knowledge and habits of life as may render them useful members of the European community. [1, p. 7]

In the early 19th century many children with European roots were concentrated in Bombay. The majority of the children lived in poverty and could not get an education. It soon became necessary to admit "such children into a boarding-house and to provide them with food and clothing. Many of the students were entire orphans and had no homes; and others were sent from distant military stations without any means of being provided for at the Presidency". [2, p.6] There were some regimental schools at the various military headquarters, which the Society helped by assisting in the training of their teachers, and by supplying them with

books. In the report for 1820, 54 girls (attending five such schools) are mentioned, some of them being native girls. [3, p. 25] Despite the fact that the purpose of the institutions was to educate European children, Indian children were also accepted there.

The English-speaking people gave liberal support to the Society. The Governor of the Bombay Presidency was President of the Society. The Managing Committee comprised military officers and civilians. The Ladies' Committee was formed in 1815 to look after the girls' school. The Committee, which met regularly every month attended to such matters as scrutinizing the applications for admission to the schools, appointing teachers (mostly women), matrons and nurses for the schools, and looking after the money transactions. Besides, they used to superintend the schools, be present at the time of examinations and help the grown-up pupils to find employment as domestic servants in the houses of European families.

The curriculum in these schools consisted of Reading, Writing, Arithmetic, English, History, Geography and Christianity. Knitting and Needle-work were compulsory subjects, and the money realized by selling the articles prepared by the pupils was spent on the schools. These articles were mostly petticoats, shirts, children's garments, embroidered sheets, pillow-cases, handkerchiefs, etc. In 1852, the Ladies' Committee fitted up a temporary kitchen and a laundry for the purpose of instructing the older girls, before they left, in practical household duties. [4, p. 18]

The expenditure on the girls' schools was Rs. 20,285-10-3 in 1856, while it was only Rs. 7,690-3-0 in 1820. [5, p. 27] As for the income, it was made up mostly of subscriptions from the English officers and soldiers in the army, and the civil officers including the

Governor. Donations, too, were received from them occasionally. Then there was the money realized by the sale of articles prepared by the girls; for instance, in 1846, the amount so collected was Rs. 762-6-8. A notable thing about the list of subscribers and donors is that it contains the names of four Parsi gentlemen, namely Cursetjee Jumsetjee, Cursetjee Ardeseer Dady, Cursetjee Cowasjee Dady and Cursetjee Roostumjee Dady. [6, p. 14]

Another notable attempt to promote the education of girls in Maharashtra was made by the Protestant missionaries. The missionaries of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, the Church Missionary Society of London and the Scottish Mission of Edinburgh started their activities in Maharashtra.

The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions started its activities in Bombay in 1815. [7, p. 2] The American missionaries established the first girls' school for Jewish girls in 1824. "It was called the 'Salem School' as the ladies in Salem [U.S.A.] provided money for it." [8, p. 338]. Number of American Mission schools slowly increased so much so that even a small town like Siroor had one such school. In 1851, there were in all twelve schools with a total enrolment of 225 pupils. The same year, the American missionaries maintained three schools in Satara, the number of pupils ranging from sixty to seventy-five. In 1853 in Kolhapur the number of girls attending the boys' schools run by the American Mission was 100. American missionaries, however, had to close a number of schools when the Board's receipts greatly diminished as a result of the panic caused by the financial crisis in the U. S. A.

The Scottish Missionary Society of Edinburgh entered this field in 1823. Their activities were concentrated in the Bankot-Harnai region of Konkan. In 1827, 313 girls were attending the 80 boys' schools in that region. [9, p.188] As separate schools for girls were not popular in Konkan, the experiment was not tried for quite some time there. Bombay Ladies' School, a boarding-school for destitute native girls, was started by the Scottish Mission in 1832. [10, p. 104] Its object was to provide food, shelter and Christian instruction to those native girls neglected by their relatives and prevented by their poverty from entering other Mission schools. [11, p. 104] By 1842, there were four such Scottish Missionary schools in Poona; and two, in Indapur, with 600 girls on their list. After the disruption of the Church of Scotland in 1847, many of the schools were taken over by the Free Church Mission of Scotland.

Yet another effort of this type was made by George Candy, secretary of the local committee of the Church Missionary Society in Bombay. In 1838, he established a boarding-school in Bombay for Indo-British girls. It was known as the Indo-British Mission.

In its report for 1848, the *Oriental Christian Spectator* says: "The Indo-British Mission in Bombay runs male and female schools ... erected by benevolent individuals and by very liberal grants from ... the Society for Promoting Christian knowledge. ... [which] is most usefully employed amongst the Indo-British commu-

nity, and. ... has with much pains sought out the scattered members of the Indo-British community in Bombay. ... Into the schools of this Institution are admitted such poor Christian children as are not eligible for admission into the schools of the Bombay Education Society." [12, p. 237-238]

All these Mission schools received support from some of the English-speaking people in India and from people in Britain and in the United States of America. The Ladies' Associations formed in various cities in America supported these schools. The Scottish ladies formed "The Scottish Ladies' Society for Female Education in India" at Edinburgh. The Church Missionary Society raised a special fund for the education of females in India every year. Ladies' Associations were formed in Bombay, Poona and Ahmednagar to support these Mission schools. During the financial crisis in America in 1837, local Ladies' Associations helped to maintain the girls' schools. The Government officers, both civil and military, were in full sympathy with the efforts of the missionaries. In the lists of donors and subscribers, one finds the names of dignitaries like Mount Stuart Elphinstone and Sir John Malcolm. The real motive behind this liberality was, of course, "the expansion of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ," but it certainly helped the cause of girls' education.

Further efforts in the cause of girls' education were made by the people of Maharashtra themselves. A newly educated generation was emerging in Bombay. Indian philanthropist and educationalist Jagannath Shankarseth foreseeing the need for improvements in education, he became one of the founders of the School Society and the Native School of Bombay, the first of its kind in Western India. There were classes for girls in that school. The school went through a series of name changes: in 1824, it became the Bombay Native Institution, in 1840, the Board of Education, and in 1856 the name which continues to this day, the Elphinstone Educational Institution. It is the same institution where, the well known, Balshashtri Jambhekar, Dadabhai Nauroji, Mahadev Govind Ranade, Ramakrishna Gopal Bhandarkar were the students during Nana's period.

In 1848, Dadabhai Nauroji and some progressive young men like him founded "The Students' Literary And Scientific Society." In 1849, the Society established three Parsi and three Marathi schools for girls. After some time, two Parsi schools for girls was added in Gujarat. Later, the Parsi girls' schools were transferred to a committee of Parsi gentlemen, who undertook to maintain and manage them. In 1858, there were altogether nine schools for girls; four for Parsis, three for Marathi-speaking girls and two for Gujaratis. The Society extended its activities to Thana, where it opened a Marathi school and a Gujarati school for girls. The number of girls served by the Society was about 800. [13, p. 13]

Many Parsis gave liberal donations for books, prizes, furniture and the like. In 1859 Manockjee Cursetjee started English school for Indian girls. Initially it was in his house, "Villa Byculla", with an English governess and his daughters as staff. In 1863 Cursetjee founded the Alexandra Native Girls' Institution named after Alexandra of Denmark.

All those who wished to promote the education of girls had to fight against the strong prejudices present in Indian society at that time. It was believed that education spoilt the girls and interfered with their household duties, and that only low class girls went to school. The missionaries used their regular preaching service and their periodicals to advocate the cause of girls' education. The Bombay Tract and Book Society held an essay competition and gave prizes to the best essays (in the native languages) on girls' education. Many articles were written on the subject in periodicals like *Darpan*, the *Dnyanaprakash*, the *Prabhakar* (a Marathi periodical) and in the Gujarati periodicals. Harkaruand Vurtaman. The American missionaries, who were pioneers in this field, wrote in 1834-35: "The results of our efforts in behalf of female education are every year becoming encouraging. It can no longer be regarded as an experiment, whether, the Hindu female [sic] is capable of intellectual improvement. Facts demonstrate that she », and that to an extent which completely astonishes the prejudiced and superstitious father." [14, p. 174]

The other difficulty was how to retain the girls in the schools for a reasonable time; for they used to leave school before reaching the age of eleven, and in some cases, even earlier. "The custom of marrying girls in [their] childhood was of itself nearly fatal to any plans for their proper education. The training under 'the tongue and hand of the *sasu* [mother-in-law]' was thought more important than the teaching in schools." [15, p.62] Girls over the age of twelve were not sent to school as there were no women teachers. The girls from poor families left school in search of employment to support their families. Prizes were given to induce the girls to remain in school longer. In many cases, the missionaries used to give a daily allowance to ensure attendance. The irregularity of attendance was due to the number of social and religious functions which required the presence and the assistance of the girls at home. So, though the numbers of the schools and of the pupils were impressive, the progress in the field of girls' education was not satisfactory.

The lack of women teachers was one of the major barrier. Here, a reference must be made to Gangabai, the first woman teacher in Maharashtra; she worked for six months in one of the girls' schools managed by the American Mission in Bombay, in 1824. Gordon Hall, an American missionary, writes thus about her: "We regret that no further mention is made of this Gangabai, the first native woman employed in Bombay to teach [in] a Christian School. How did she herself learn to read? And in the face of the opposition attaching to such an occupation, where did she get the courage to enter upon it?" [16, p. 61] The probable answer to Gordon Hall's first question seems to be that she might have been a pupil in one of the Regimental Schools which were conducted from 1815.

There is evidence that, after 1848, there were some native women teachers such as Maina, Bhimabai, Sai and Girji, who were connected either with the Free Church Mission or the Church Missionary Society. They were mostly either wives or daughters of converts to Christianity. Savitribai Phule was another great teacher, whose courage and endurance made it possible

for Jotiba to found and maintain girls' schools in an orthodox city of that period like Poona. Yet another teacher was Chimabai, who taught in one of the Marathi schools in Bombay, but could not carry on her work for more than two years owing to ill health.

The rigidity of the caste system was reflected in the distribution of the girls in the various schools. The schools of the Bombay Education Society were for the Protestant children only. Candy's school was for the Indo-British children, who were the followers of the Church of England. In the Mission schools, practically all the castes were represented; but there were some separate schools for the Mahars and the Mangs in Bombay and Ahmednagar. Actually the Maratha girls were the majority. There was a separate school for Muslim girls in Poona. The schools of the time were conducted mostly caste wise. There were separate schools for Parsi girls, two Gujarati schools for Bania girls, two Marathi schools for girls belonging to the higher castes such as Brahmin, Shenvi and Prabhoo and a Marathi school mostly for Shimpi girls. Jotiba Phule's schools were open to all the low castes.

In conclusion, the main aspects of the education of girls in Maharashtra during the rule of the Company may be summed up thus: The missionaries from abroad were the first to start schools for girls, thus setting an example to the local people. Though the Hindus declared at that time that "such education never had been, never should be, and never could be, the missionaries ... showed by their efforts that native female education was practicable, and the females who were educated, showed that it was admirable." [17, p. 324] The efforts of most of these missionaries were concentrated in Bombay in the initial stages. The Parsis were the first to realize the importance of education for girls and to contribute liberally towards the maintenance of their girls' schools. What little response there was from the Hindus was favourable to the schools for high caste girls; the schools for low caste girls did not receive such encouragement, for two reasons: first, the high caste people had strong prejudices against the low caste people; and second, there was, at that time in Poona, no commercial class with wide sympathies to contribute liberally to such a noble cause. Though the success of all these schools was not very outstanding, they have an importance all their own; they were the small beginnings of great things to come, not only in the field of girls' education but also in the field of social reform.

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3. Report of the Bombay Education Society. Bombay, 1820. P. xxvii

4. Report of the Bombay Education Society. Bombay, 1852. P. xxxii

5. Report of the Bombay Education Society. Bombay, 1820. P. xxxvii

6. Report of the Bombay Education Society. Bombay, 1827. P. xvii

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