



## Women education in British period Special reference: Bharatpur Riyasat (1866-1947)

Dr. Meena Ambesh

Lecturer- History, B.S.R. Govt. Arts College, Alwar, Rajasthan, India

### Abstract

Women's education in India cannot be seen in isolation as it is determined and influenced by the position of women in the society. Women Indian society have suffered from long past. Their freedom was restricted at every step. According to an old belief., a woman does not deserve any freedom, because she is protected by her father in her childhood, by her husband in her youth, and by her son in her old age. It puts Hindu women under over protection family.

**Keywords:** women, education, bharatpur, government, school, modern

### Introduction

Woman education in ancient India was Prevalent. Woman in Ancient India had free access to education. They were expected to participate in vedic sacrifices and Utter Mantras. Even Some of the hymns of the Rigveda a were composed by poetesses. We get references of such learned, ladies as Visvavara, Lopamudra, Apala Ghosa, Sulabha, Gargi, Maitreyi and others. Maitreyi the celebrated wife of the most learned philosopher of Ancient India, Yagnavalka, used to hold discussion on philosophical questions with her husband. Gargi is also said to have participated in a debate with Yagnavalka on philosophical issues. Similarly Lilabati was a great Mathematician of ancient India. Thus we find that Ancient Society was not conservative at all in providing education to woman and that many women attained to great proficiencies in learning. The ancient women enjoyed equal rights with men in respect of attaining education. Not only that the "upanayana" of girls seems to have been as common as that of boys. In the Vedic Period the women not only enjoyed privileged position but also possessed high standards of Morality. They had contributed positively to the education system. The number of women who received general literary and cultural education seems to have been fairly large <sup>[1]</sup>.

There was no Purdah System (wearing a veil) in Hindu Society down to the 12<sup>th</sup> century, and so there was no difficulty for women in taking to the teaching profession. Female teachers may probably have confined themselves to the teaching of girl students – Panini refers to boarding houses for female students, chhatrisatas, and these probably were under the care of female teachers <sup>[2]</sup>. We also find that co-education was also prevalent in ancient India in mild form. Sometimes boys and girls were educated together while receiving higher education. From the Malatimadhava of Bhavabhuti written in the 8<sup>th</sup> century A.D, we learn that the hun Kamandaki was educated along with Bhurivasu and Devarata at a Famous centre of education. In Uttar Rama-Charita also we find Atreyi receiving her education with Kusa and Lava.

The position of women slowly declined and got worse by

about eighteenth century A.D. The Purdah custom was practiced more widely among the royal classes and the middle classes. A.S. Altekar has remarked, "For nearly 2000 years from 200 B.C. to 1800 A.D. the position of the women steadily deteriorated," even though parents husband and children loved and respected them. The revival of Sati, the prohibition of Widow remarriage, 'The spread of purdah and greater prevalence of polygamy made women's position very low. However, Education of women continued in rich, cultural royal and aristocratic families. They were given a good grounding in domestic work and fine arts like, music, painting, garland-making and house hold decorations. They could read and write Sanskrit and Prakrit. Tutors were engaged in rich families to train girls in these acts and accomplishments <sup>[3]</sup>. It was limited to a very small section of society

### Women education in Rajasthan

In Rajasthan the system of education for women was not much different at the elementary stage, though higher education of girls was done at home.

Part of It was oral education non-formal, and sought to inculcate religious and cultural values; Music and dance were the essential attributes of this education. The other part consisted in a study of historical and literary works. There are enough evidences of high literacy attainment by women of upper classes.

Similarly the manuscripts preserved in the Maharaja of Jaipur museum bear eloquent testimony of the ability of women in the royal families to compose them. These manuscripts contain a fair use of Sanskrit Urdu and Persian words which speak of their knowledge of these languages. The upper class women were specially educated in the art of letter writing, painting. The archives contain a whole series of the Zenani Deorhi documents which are letters written by ladies of the royal household including the concubines Pasbans, Badarans etc.

Worth mentioning that Major Nixon was surprised at the elaborated arrangements at jodhpur for the education of ladies

in the Zenani Deorhi <sup>[4]</sup>.

Similar arrangements were made at Bundi, Jaipur and other states. Some paintings in the Jaipur museum indicate that women were fond of horse riding and sword fighting, Major Foster on hearing of military preparations by women at Modigarh had to come back for greater reinforcements in 1858.

The political agent Col. Eden mentioned resistance by ladies in Khetri. The tradition of queen mothers acting as regents during the minority of the ruler spoke of enough administrative ability on their part to run the administration in Bharatpur. The queen of Bharatpur Maharaja Baldev Singh wrote Chaturpriya and Chatursakshi and the queen of Maharaja Ram Singh Rani Giriraj Kanwar wrote Brajvilas and Pakprakash <sup>[5]</sup>.

Hence It would be wrong to form an idea about the education of women in the states from the absence of formal girls school and school of English education for females.

### Main Obstacles to Women Education in Bharatpur

In Modern era the comparison to other parts of the country problems of women in the past were slightly different in the princely states of Rajasthan because of the feudal structure of the society. The Christian missionaries and princely rulers took interest in women problems very late. Bharatpur is a Jat Riyasat so some of the evil social practices such as female infanticide, child marriage, purdah, sati etc. were more prevalent in this provinces. The main obstacles to women education were.

- 1. Conservatism:** The conservative attitude of even educated fathers, towards girls was surprising. The efforts of the missionaries to spread education among the girls did not prove successful in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Girls also stayed away from the missionary educational institutions, for fear of conversion to Christianity.
- 2. Purdah System:** The Social system in which Purdah was taken to be a symbol of respectability, naturally worked against the education of women.  
When the Muslim kings invaded the country, Purdah became more prevalent. The women of royal families were trained to live in Purdah Circumscribing their activities in Antahpur or Zenani Deorhi.
- 3. Early Marriage:** The most formidable obstacle in the way of women's education and their general progress was the system of early marriage. It was not uncommon to see marriage of girls in tender age, in many cases much below the age of ten.
- 4. Infanticide:** The birth of a girl was considered a curse among most sections of Hindu Society in general and among the Rajputs and Jats in particular. The Jats of Bharatpur practiced it because according to them the giving of their daughters in marriage was an act of disgrace to their family <sup>[6]</sup>. Report on the political administration of the Rajputana State shows in the year 1883-84 in Bharatpur one case of infanticide was reported as having occurred in maded tehsil on the 24<sup>th</sup> November 1883 when one lady, widow of Dhobi, Brahman charged with having murdered her illegitimate female infant. This case was tried by the criminal court. This offence was

confessed by the accused who was sentenced to imprisonment for life which was approved by council on 1<sup>st</sup> December 1883.

- 5. Poverty, Famine and Epidemics:** Poverty, natural calamities like famine, flood etc. and epidemics such as malaria, plague also proved to be an obstacle in the way of progress of women education. In 1908-09, 1918-19 and 1924-25 flood are responsible for drop out of girls in school of Bharatpur.

### Progress of women education in Bharatpur (Modern education)

Political Administration of Rajputana States Col. Eden (The A.G.G) Writes in the First Annual Report in 1866 that a small girls school was established at Oodeypore and has since been maintained, similar institutions exist at Jeypore and Bhurtpore."

In 1866 Captain Walter Political Agent, Bharatpur, refers to one girls school in the city of Bharatpur with seven students in it <sup>[7]</sup>.

Next year another school with six girls was opened and small number of girls in these two schools shows the colossal apathy and indifference people of the Jat. State Bharatpur which resulted in the closure of one of the two girls schools in 1873.

So Before 1866 Not much attention was paid to the education of girls. There was only one indigenous school for the girls in the city and the number of girls going to it was only seven.

In 1867 The Bharatpur Maharaja Jaswant Singh took personal interest towards women education and opened a school with six girl students, but due to Purdah system and the practice of early marriage of the girls, the total attendance in both remained very poor being 10 in one and six in the other. Thus, owing to prejudice against educating girls, the school failed to get on and had to be closed by government in 1873 <sup>[8]</sup>.

Girls' schools were opened in Bharatpur city in 1900-01, Weir in 1902-03, Deeg in 1903-04, Kumher, Kama and Bhusavar in 1905-06. Till March 1905, 200 girls were taking education in six schools.

The opening of these schools gave a great impetus to female education and as a result the number of girls going to school began to increase every day. The governments were also taking some steps to encourage female education,

1. Besides reading and writing, needle work was taught and books and writing material were supplied free in order to encourage the female education among girls.
2. Girls of respectable families were allowed with Purdah.
3. The Children were brought with maid servant.
4. Prizes and scholarships were liberally awarded <sup>[9]</sup>.
5. Qualified and trained, female teachers were engaged and female education was also encouraged by providing scholarships and stipends.
6. In order to fetch girls of respectable families free conveyance facility was arranged <sup>[10]</sup>.

Since 1917-18 the government was started giving scholarships to encourage girl education. And was increasing the Budget every year for scholarship every year

**Table 1**

Year	Budget for Scholarship	Budget for Girls Scholarship	Budget % for girls scholarship
1917-18	10,667	275	2.5%
1920-21	10,256	354	3.45%
1921-22	12,433	284	2.28%
1922-23	10,437	325	3.12%

As seen above the budget allocation for girl's scholarships was not too much but it shows that the government started taking interest in women education.

The Maharaja of Bharatpur Kishan Singh also banned two social evils related to women – widow remarriage and early marriage through a social reform act in 26 May 1926<sup>[11]</sup>.

In 1928-29 government started one girl school at Nagar. Also, arrangements were made for teaching English. In 1929-30 a girl student of Sanskrit Ayurvedic school appeared in Ayurvedic Exam and successfully cleared the Exam. Three girls of Bharatpur appeared at the middle examination and all were successful, and one was placed in the first division<sup>[12]</sup>.

Since 1931 English began to be taught at Bharatpur upto the middle standard. As a result of various efforts being made number of girls continuously increased in schools, for Example- 473 girls were receiving education in 1931 against 448 in the preceding year. This year one girl appeared at the vernacular final examination in all the subject from the state and was successful<sup>[13]</sup> (1931-32)

Hence female education was continuously increasing. The percentage of school going males to male population was 17.52% against 19.3% of the last years. While for school going females, it was 3.10% against 2.95% of the preceding year<sup>[14]</sup>.

In 1933-34 a girl school was started at Nadbai and same year Bharatpur girl school was upgraded from Lower Middle to Upper Middle Standard<sup>[15]</sup>.

In 1936-37 the department of education held an examination in which 411 girls participated and 388 were successful. The high percentage of successful girls of 94.40 clearly shows that girls were taking interest in education. At the time of Maharaja Vijendra Singh, there were 10 girls schools and 16 female teachers were appointed in these schools<sup>[16]</sup>.

In July 1945 The Upper Middle School of Bharatpur upgraded to high School. In 1945-46, there were 23 girls school, out of which 1 high school, 2 vernacular Middle school and 20 other primary level school with 1422 girls was studying in them<sup>[17]</sup>.

### Showing the progress of women education

**Table 2**

Year	Number of girls Schools	Number of female Teachers	Number of female Students
1866	1	1	07
1867	2	1	13
1905	06	-	200
1910	06	06	177
1911	06	06	186
1917	07	09	307
1931	09	14	473
1947	23	28	1422

Beside government efforts towards women education in Bharatpur, the Aryasamajists, and the workers of Prajamandal movement also contributed and made efforts in this direction. The Bharatpur Arya Samaj opened a girls school (Aryakanya Vidhyalaya) on 1<sup>st</sup> July 1906 in which the number of girls studying rose to 112 by 1912. To attract girls towards education and school, classes of dance, music, painting and home science were started in the school, resulting in greater interest to education among them<sup>[18]</sup>.

In Arya Kanya School, the Arya Samajists also started an English department to promote and encourage English language in the school apart from Hindi and Sanskrit languages. A grant ranging from Rs. 25 to Rs 50 was also provided by the state government to this school.

The Arya Samajists of Bharatpur also opened another girls school at Vallabhgarh in 1932 which was upgraded to a middle school in 1945 owing to good number of girls students in it. A vedic kanya school was also started at Bhusavar in April 1937, where efforts were also made to make girls self dependent by providing training facilities to them in some arts such as in sewing machine etc.

Raghunath Prasad Bhusavar walay, the main aryasamajist in Bharatpur established a Mahila Vidyapeeth in 1945 to promote girl's education. Girls came to this institute to receive education, not only from Rajasthan, but from Various other provinces and Hyderabad (South) also. Vidyapeeth also initiated a system of providing monthly scholarships to girls ranging an amount of Rs. 1/- to Rs. 15/-.

Besides contributions made by Arya samajists, the volunteers of Praja mandal (Founded in 1940) also encouraged women education at organization level and at personal level too. In this context, master Adityendra did exemplary work who greatly contributed in promoting girls education.

### Conclusion

Thus, it can be concluded that the efforts in the direction of girl's education in Bharatpur started since 1866 along with Jaipur and Udaipur and not only by the Maharaja of Bharatpur and the British government but also by the other local factors and elements such as Aryasamaj and Prajamandal also greatly contributed to the necessity of girl's education.

### Reference

1. Altekar AS. Education in Ancient India Page. 45
2. Panini; 6.2.68
3. Altekar AS. The position of women in Hindu civilization page 170.
4. Yadav Santosh- उन्नीसवीं और बीसवीं शताब्दी में स्त्रियों की स्थिति, प्रिंटबैल पब्लिशर्स 1987.
5. मरु भारती, जुलाई 1981 पृष्ठ 83-85.
6. Pakrasi KB. Female infanticide in India Page- 16
7. Administrative report of the Bharatpur state of 1866-77 Page 201
8. Administrative report of the Bharatpur state of 1873-74 Page 162
9. Administrative report of the Bharatpur state of 1905-06 Page 14
10. Administrative report of the Bharatpur state of 1917-18 Page 45

11. Mishra SC. National movement in the princely states  
Page 8-9
12. Administrative report of the Bharatpur state of 1929-30  
Page 33
13. Administrative report of the Bharatpur state of 1931-32  
Page 18
14. Administrative report of the Bharatpur state of 1932-33  
Page 24
15. Administrative report of the Bharatpur state of 1933-34  
Page 27
16. Administrative report of the Bharatpur state of 1936-37  
Page 28.
17. Verma GC. Modern education its growth and  
development in Rajasthan. 1818-1983, Page 346-47
18. File No. 13/18 Head 18, education department Bharatpur  
Rajasthan State Archives, Bikaner.