

Development of Women Education and its Impact on the Status of Women: A Case Study of Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century Darjeeling

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[Editorial Note: The paper is a summary of the nature of women education during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries Darjeeling. D.A.]

Abstract: *Education provides a base for the upliftment of the status of women in the society. If women in society does not get access to education, they are unable to make claim for their rights, and in the long run this affect their status. Women though constituted almost half of the population in the world were denied equal opportunities. As a result of their little access to education, they were forced to accept the secondary status to men. Darjeeling, being a colonial master, could not escape from such social injustice. The situation in Darjeeling was little unique with regards to women education. It nurtured a society, which though patriarchal in nature, had allowed women to go out from their domestic domain for livelihood. However, they lagged substantially in getting formal education. The nineteenth century being a transitional phase as a result of the introduction of British colonial rule and various social reform movements, the sector of women education was also substantially touched upon. The unlettered women of colonial Darjeeling encountered the world of education with the help of missionaries and the Bengali bhadramahilas. The education of native women in turn gradually transformed their status in the society. In the present paper, an attempt is made to examine the nature of the progress of female education in Darjeeling hills and how far it impacted upon their status in the society.*

Keywords: *Women Education, Changing Status, Colonial Darjeeling, Missionaries, Bhadramahilas*

Introduction:

It is of no doubt that the development of a society is dependent on progressive scientific education. A positive mind and rational thought process can be developed through education. In India the modern education was brought about by western officials and the missionaries. Although they had their own motives behind the introduction of western learning, Indians were largely benefitted by the policy. The western education even being a new concept was well accepted by a substantial population.

At the outset, the authors clarify their limitation and scope of the paper in which the other intricate details apart from women education and its impact in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries of Darjeeling will be not touched upon. Darjeeling is the northernmost and the only hill district of West Bengal. The district lies between 26°31' - 27°13' North

latitude and 87° 53'- 88°53' east longitude; that is, 35×18 miles in length and breadth respectively (Dozey 1922: 37). It was opened to the British in the early nineteenth century after which it saw an acceleration in its developmental process. Following this the migration of diverse population also enhanced. In pursuance of various economic activities, the people from surrounding areas started flocking around the hill. Very soon the places inhabited by few aboriginal tribes were exposed to the world and this transformation was felt in almost every sphere of human life of Darjeeling.

The main objective of the article is to focus on different issues leading to the development of women education in Darjeeling hills. It aims to investigate the condition of women living in hills, the challenges, and hindrances the hill women faced during their journey to educate themselves. Modern education consequently paved the way for their upliftment. The study also explores the evolution of changing status of hill women after their exposure to modern education.

Historical Development of Darjeeling

It is generally believed that Darjeeling is a creation of the nineteenth century. At first it formed a part of the Raja of Sikkim, a petty ruler who had long been engaged in an unsuccessful struggle against the growing power of the warlike Gorkhas (O' Malley 1907: 19). The area was later overrun by the Nepalis. In 1817, the East India Company struggled with the Himalayan states on behalf of Raja of Sikkim and thus Treaty of Titaliya was signed in 1817. After ten years, dispute arose between Sikkim and Nepal and matter was referred to the Governor General. Two British Officers, Captain Llyod and J.W. Grant were deputed to deal with the dispute in 1828. From a report dated 18th June 1829, in which he claims to have been the only European who ever visited the place, we learn that Lloyd visited "the old Gurkha station called Darjeeling for six days in February 1829 and was immediately struck with its being well adapted for the purpose of Sanatorium" (O' Malley 1907: 20). The Governor General Lord William Bentick deputed Captain Herbert as the Deputy Surveyor General to examine the site. The Court of Directors approved the project. General George Aylmer Lloyd was directed to start negotiations with the Raja of Sikkim. On 1st February 1835 he succeeded in obtaining a Deed of Grant from the Raja of Sikkim. The Deed of Grant reads as follows:

The Governor General having expressed his desire for possession of the hill of Darjeeling on account of its cool climate, for the purpose of enabling the servants of his government, suffering from sickness, to avail themselves of its advantages, I, the Sikkimputtee Rajah, out of friendship for the said Governor General, hereby present Darjeeling to the East India Company, that is all the land of South of the Great Rungeet river, and west of Rungpoo and Mahanuddi rivers. (O' Malley 1907: 21).

From 1836, the station was developed by General Lloyd and Chapman and by 1840, a road was constructed from Pankhabari. In 1839, Dr. Campbell of the Indian Medical Service was appointed as the Superintendent of Darjeeling. He was previously a British resident in

Nepal. At Darjeeling he was in charge of dealing political affairs with Sikkim and was entrusted with the civil, criminal and fiscal administration of the district.

In the meantime, the relation between Sikkim and the British Government had been far from satisfactory. The British subjects were being continuously kidnapped. As a result of which in February 1850 an expedition was sent by the British. The Sikkim Terai was annexed. A portion of the Sikkim hills bounded by the Ramman on the north, the great Rangit and the Tista on the east and Nepal frontier on the west, a tract of country containing about 5000 souls was also annexed (Ray 1980: 472).

In the beginning of 1862, the news of Bhutanese attack on Darjeeling had spread. Troops were at once stationed at Darjeeling. In 1863 a special mission was sent by British under Sir Asley Eden. The British Envoy was openly insulted in the *darbar* and his demands were also rejected. He was compelled, as the only means of ensuring safe return, to sign under protest a document by which the Government of India was to renounce the Bhutan Duars on the Assam frontier. Sir Asley Eden, who had been treated with gross indignity, at last succeeded in leaving Punaka during the night and returned to Darjeeling in 1864. A military force was dispatched to Bhutan in 1865, and the treaty exorted from Sir Asley Eden was given up in favour of a fresh treaty. The whole of Bhutanese possession in the plains thus became British. Kalimpong area was also ceded to the British. In the year 1866, the area got included in the Darjeeling district. This was the last addition to the district, which thus acquired a large area ranging from 640 to 1164 sq miles (Dozey 1922: 2). Hence Darjeeling saw the growth of tea plantation, construction works, both railways and roadways. Eventually, the British utilized the region for sanatorium purpose owing to its pleasant climate and later transformed it into an educational hub for the Anglo-Indian children.

When British first stepped into Darjeeling the population was quite modest but gradually the development process influenced a large-scale immigration from surrounding areas. By 1881, the Nepalese formed the absolute majority of Darjeeling town and also of the district. Few Bengali families serving administrative and clerical jobs also settled in the town. Slowly, the Marwaris and Beharis gathered for commercial purposes. Thus, gradually Darjeeling was inhabited by different socio-cultural groups, and this had a tremendous impact on every sphere of society including the status of women.

Conditions of Education during Pre-colonial Period

The pre-British education system in Darjeeling Hills was very simple and practical one. No formal education was known to them. They had some general idea about their surroundings, landscapes, forests, and animals. The ethnic groups like *Rai*, *Lepcha*, *Limbu*, and *Bhutias* followed their traditional cultures, religious faiths, and economic activities. Their learning was acquired through their actual participation in various activities of home and society. The concept of popular education was unknown when British took over the district (O'Malley 1907: 170). The education back then was synonymous to experience, obtained from the elders of the society. There were no books, except the religious scriptures

but folk drama, folk tales, folk songs, and stories were handed down from generation to generation. This was informal way of imparting traditional values and information to new generations. Religion dominated the life of the people. Faith and practices connected with the religions had played a dominant role in education. During the closing decade of the eighteenth-century, monasteries were established, and they provided religious education. Monasteries became the centre of education, but such education was mostly restricted to men, who were aspired to become monks. The oldest monastery of Darjeeling, at Observatory Hill though was a place of worship, also experienced an elaborate teaching-learning process of Buddhist religion and culture. They were taught to chant the Tibetan texts (Pradhan, A. K. interviewed: 21.07.2021). However, in the case of women, the education was mainly experience-based as mentioned above, and they learned mostly about domestic chores, cooking, agriculture, cultivation, child rearing, religion, folk songs, tales, medicines, flora and fauna, etc. Such experience-based learning though, bears enough significance in day-to-day life, cannot be termed as education in modern sense of term. For the hill people, school or formal education was still unheard of.

Condition of Women in Colonial Darjeeling

While reviewing the scenario of the nineteenth century Darjeeling, one must be very clear of the fact that it was not the condition of women of a homogenous society, rather that of a varied society in a more or less similar geographical terrain. A diverse cultural set up is one of the chief characteristics found in the Darjeeling hills. Different communities had different social rules and regulations which ascertained the position of men and women in their respective societies. The tribal groups following the animistic and Buddhist tradition were quite liberal towards women but on the other hand the Hindu society had imposed various restrictions upon women. The birth of a son was preferred by the upper caste Hindus as son played a major role in the funeral rites. However, we have hardly been come across any traces of infanticide in the native society. The girls were usually married off at a tender age. Even in the Hindu society the women had a certain role and there was a tradition of worshipping the sisters and daughters during some ceremonies at home¹. The married women had some important roles at their maternal home particularly during the funeral rites and ceremonies of certain castes such as Newars (Pradhan, A.K. interviewed: 21. 07. 2021).

In Darjeeling, generally, the upper caste Hindu women were not allowed to mix freely with others, and they were more involved in household chores. The tribal or the ethnic communities showed different picture. These societies displayed more flexible attitude

¹ As we all know that The Hindu societies do worship their premenstrual daughters and sisters on every religious function by putting them *tika* and touching their feet and take blessings from them. The eldest male member of the family puts the *tika* but touching feet and the blessings are taken by all. Even if the family doesn't have premenstrual ladies, they are brought from neighborhood and worshipped.

towards women. The women of Lepcha, Limbu, Tamang, Mangar, Gurung, and Rai used to enjoy much freedom and they were even allowed to take part in the family investment alongside men. Limbu, Tamang and Rai women used to enjoy inheritance rights on father's properties. A single Lepcha daughter also had equal rights on the house, ancestral land, and property of her parents like of a son. However, as soon she is married to a person she was automatically ousted from her claim to father's house, ancestral land and property (*Lepcha Customary Law*: <https://aachuley.wordpress.com>; accessed on July 21st 2021). During the concerned period, generally the upper caste Hindu family believed in arranged marriages within their own society. The tribal communities like Gurung, Tamang and Mangars practiced cross-cousin marriages. However, in both the cases, the women had a very little freedom in choosing their life partners. A unique type of marriage was in vogue in the Newari community where a girl was married thrice; first with the *bel* (woodapple), second with the sun, and third time with a man belonging to their own community. A Newari girl had never been considered as widow even if her husband died. Widow Remarriage was not a matter of concern in the tribal communities. Lepcha and Sherpa women could remarry within the periphery of their lawful family. No evidence of infanticide, *sati* and dowry deaths have hitherto been reported though polygamy, polyandry (in some tribes) and dowry system were present in some communities. In hills, the dowry was not a compulsion or demands but it was in the form of gifts from the bride's family. Due to coming from different financial backgrounds even within a single community, the condition of such women showed not much difference from those hailing from the rest of the country.

The practice of intermingling of different customs and culture in colonial Darjeeling left a great impact on women. They began to adopt each other's manners and customs. The mixing of the tribal and Hindu societies led to the exchange and assimilation of their culture and beliefs. However, such intermingling had both positive and negative impacts. Greatly influenced from the Hindu women, some of the tribal women started following the Hindu tradition of using vermilion on their forehead and even keeping distance from menstrual women. On the other hand, the colonial influence provided a different environment for these women to grow. The tribal ladies who already had an experience of liberty because of their own socio-economic practices were further empowered by encountering the colonial domain.

The hill women apart from their domestic work were also employed as porters, *ayahs*, tea garden labourers. The British women, popularly known as *memsahibs* also recruited them as their domestic servants. *Memsahib* was also an epithet widely used for the white women or the wives of the British governmental officials of Darjeeling. The children of *Memsahibs* were looked after by these hill women. The native women got much to learn, especially the western livelihood pattern from their masters, the *memsahibs*. By working in the houses of such *memsahibs* they got a humble training about health care, hygiene, home decors,

gardening etc. It is of no doubt that in Darjeeling hills, a social change happened owing to such western contact.

Development of Women Education

The Charter Act of 1813 compelled the East India Company to provide education to the masses of India but the activities of missionaries, where they were directly involved, has never been challenged by the authority. Such policy was even followed in England. Alexander Duff, a greatest missionary of the period had faith in the potential power of English to secure converts. Any endeavour on understanding the growth and progress of infrastructure of education in the district of Darjeeling will be incomplete without giving proper honour in the first place to the Christian Missionaries who have made pioneering effort in the same. By the Charter Act of 1833, Missions from the other countries came to India. The most prominent among them were German and American Missions. It was in the year 1841 Rev. William Start, a Baptist from England was first to bring a band of Moravian Missionaries (Trutler, Wernicke, Stolke, Schultz, and Neibel) and established a school for the natives at Tukvar (Anon 1857: 50). The Lepcha School did not last long and failed. There were a lot of hindrances on the way of Missionaries to open up schools at Darjeeling like language problem, and those concerning the economic as well as the geographical factors. By the Wood's Dispatch of 1854, the responsibility of education of common people was given to the British Government. W.B. Jackson in his report had mentioned about the need of opening of schools in Darjeeling (Jackson 1854: 27). As a result, Darjeeling district was granted at this period one school of the official enterprise on 20th September 1856. Therefore, the first government school was opened and named 'Darjeeling School' (Dash 1947: 276). The formal education thus begun in the hills.

Despite such endeavour, the introduction of women education in Darjeeling was still a Herculean task as it was for the rest of the country. If we comparatively look towards the beginning of woman education of Darjeeling and other areas of Bengal, we can say that institutional education reached women of Darjeeling very late. One of the most important figures on female education was Miss Macfarlane, who established the first Girls' School in 1872. She had come on a mission to help the hill girls (Himalaya Darpan: 2018). Whether the school continued or not is a matter of further debate however, it was the first institution established for the education of native women. In Darjeeling there is a Girls' Boarding School and Female Teachers' Training School, teaching up to the Upper Primary standard. The industrial training was also given to the women. (O' Malley 1907: 173). The missionaries were determined to succeed in imparting women education. The works of the missionary was strengthened by the arrival of Mr. and Mrs. Graham, members of Church of Scotland Mission. In the mountainous district there was no practice of *Zenana* System (Graham 1905: 90). As it is well-known this system was quite popular for education of women staying in closed doors particularly in the plains. In 1890 a Brahmin lady was converted by Mrs. Graham which led to a much-tensed situation. However, within a short span of time, i.e., by 1895 twelve Bengali homes with 19 pupils and 37 Nepali pupils were

brought under the same order (Chakraborty 1988: 309). Such Ladies Missions were mostly dedicated to the establishment of new schools. Mrs. Graham founded a girls' school at Kalimpong in 1891. At Kurseong there was only one school for girls which was established in 1907, known as Scott Mission School. The school provided education to both boys and girls at primary level (Thapa, Purnema interviewed: 2021). In 1894 Mrs. Graham opened an industrial school in Kalimpong. Encouragement was provided for vocational and technical learning in various fields viz. lace work, wool dyeing, weaving, tailoring, embroidery, carpet making, etc.

The Roman Catholic Missionaries at the outset had created schools for Anglo-Indian students. The Loreto Convent in 1841, St. Helen's in 1890 and St. Joseph's Convent in 1925 were mainly established for the Eurasian students and the local girls were not given access to enter the premises. This was the outcome of the strict order from the Church of Scotland Mission. However, eventually they opened schools for the natives, viz. St. Teresa founded in 1923, St. Philomena, in 1932, St. Joseph's Girls school in 1935, and St. Teresa's Pedong, a primary school for the girls. Through the government initiatives in 1898 a girl school was started at Dow Hill for the wards of Government Railway officers. The Dow Hill School was basically a girls' division of the government school at Kurseong (O' Malley 1907: 179-80).

In Darjeeling, however, it was found that no less than 12 percent of males, or approximately 1 in 8, were literate, while the proportion of literate female rose during decade ending in 1901 from 5 to 14 per 1000 approximately 1 in 71 – a ratio surpassed by no other district in West Bengal or eastern Bengal outside Calcutta (O' Malley 1907: 174).

The Government of India Act, 1919 made primary education for boys at free of cost. However, it was only by the Bengal Primary Education Act, 1930 that compulsory primary education was introduced for both boys and girls (Dewan 1991: 111-2). Therefore, the governmental effort for women education can be considered as a very delayed act.

By the end of the nineteenth century, Indian elites particularly Bengalis had started taking claim on Darjeeling. By 1880, big zamindar like Maharaja of Burdwan had built Summer Palaces in Darjeeling. Other professional classes also began to own property in Darjeeling (Bhanja 1993: 77). The place thus gradually not only became a colonial enclave for health purpose but also received enough popularity as a summer capital both for the British and Indians. The presence of Bengali *Bhadraloks* and with them the educated *bhadramahilas* started flocking around Darjeeling. In this context, it will be unwise if one ignores to mention the tremendous contribution made by Hemlata Sarkar, the daughter of Pandit Shivnath Shastri, a leader of Brahma Samaj in the spread of female education in Darjeeling. After her marriage to Bipin Behari she had settled at Darjeeling. Having educated at Bethune School and College in Calcutta she was well aware of the importance of modern education. She had difficulties in sending her daughters to school as the convent schools admitted only European girls. She took initiatives in establishing school for Indian girls, which was encouraged and financed by her friends, the Maharani of Coochbehar,

Mayurbanj, and Maharani of Burdwan. Thus, the Maharani School was started in 1908. The school provided education to the Bengali children and beneficiaries were also the Nepalese, Bhutias and Lepcha children. This school stands a mute witness to the missionary zeal of its sprightly architect and guide who less than a decade after the turn of the last century brought about revolutionary change in the field of education in the then British town of Darjeeling (Mukherjee 1968: 3).

Shri Ramakrishna Vedanta Ashram was founded in Darjeeling in 1924. Like the Christian missionaries, the Ramakrishna Mission also took up the cause of educating hill people. Swami Avedhananda worked a lot to spread education among the people of Darjeeling. In 1931 Sardeswari Girls' school was started. In 1934 Himachal Hindi Bhawan was established for both girls and boys and had a provision for a night school for the local students (Dash 1947: 266). Pranami Vidya Mandir was founded in Kalimpong in 1944. Youngmen Buddhist Association established girls' school at Ghoom (Dash 1947: 266). *Anjuman-e-Islamia* took the responsibility of educating Muslim girls. A girl *Maktab* was opened in 1910 in Darjeeling town.

By the middle of the twentieth century the largest number of schools for both boys and girls were run by the Scottish missionaries. The Girl's school at Kalimpong was upgraded to high school in 1924. The students were mainly Nepali, Bhutia and Lepcha girls. In 1944 there were 594 girls on the rolls of high school and 5 in training classes. In 1942 the Boarding school of Darjeeling was upgraded to high school and was named as Nepali Girls' High School. On 31st March 1944, the number of pupils learning in the school was 444 of which 27 were hill boys, 331 were hill girls and the remaining has been designated as Christians (Dash 1947: 267-71).

Challenges towards Women Education

As shown above, the various efforts were put together to educate women in Darjeeling by the missionaries, government, and private and native enterprises. Despite such endeavours, education was yet to receive enough popularity from the masses. The religious factor was one of the major constraints in this regard. The Bible lesson taught in school of the missionaries was disliked by the orthodox Hindu families and in fear of conversion their attendance was exceptionally low. Apart from this, the gender disparity starting from home posed a major challenge in women education. In general terms, a patriarchal society always experiences preference for boys leading to lesser participation of girls in schools. As a consequence, the women are more blinded towards the household activities. However, in the case of Darjeeling hills, the social scenario is slightly different in a sense that the women were mostly involved in skill-based jobs. For example, in tea plantation industry, they were in great demand. The economic stagnation in the society forced the women to dedicate themselves in professional works rather getting attached to books. This resulted in school dropouts at a substantial scale, which in turn made difficulties for the smooth running of schools. In most cases, girls left school midway due to a variety of reasons like for looking after their younger siblings, ill health, death of parents, loss of interest in

education, early marriages, financial crisis which led them to become coolies or labourers. The failure of the promotion at the end of the term made them discontinue studies. The geographical factor can be considered as another hindrance in the way of women education. The rugged terrain of Darjeeling without proper means of transportation mostly stood as a wall between the girls and the schools. Moreover, even after completion of schools, encouragement for getting higher education was not present in hills, at that time. In spite of such challenges there were some women who showed their great enthusiasm and took major steps for learning and changing their lives for good. This in turn started creating a new environment in the hills.

Changing Status of Women

Education is one of the most important weapons for the modernization of society. Through these weapon, equal rights, equal status, and opportunities are provided to both men and women. It is true that, some hill women did overcome hindrances and embraced western education and such education helped them to uplift their status in the society. However, in the initial phases, such changes were quite gradual and not visibly present. The twentieth Century ushered a new dawn for the lives of hill women. This new way of living had touched upon the lives of mostly every category of women ranging from those belonging to higher status to porters, *ayahs* and labourers. They started learning, practicing nursing, and even participating in political activities. The Scottish Missionaries raised the standard of education with a view of preparing more capable individuals as teachers for village school. Mention may be made of Tokyo and Mimi from Kalimpong Girls and Yanzome, Shoshi, Dhanlachi and Dhaubre who taught at 11th mile school (Smith 1911). Women students gradually started passing their intermediate examinations. The Scottish University School Register of 1938 has recorded the names of such individuals, viz. Miss Dorothy Sitling, Miss Matilda Sitling, Miss Chandrakala Thapa, Miss Amrita Devi Chhetri, Miss Chandrakala Kumari and Miss Padmavati Thapa. These women remained as inspiration to others in near future.

Similarly, the national issues were conceived well by hill women. They started being well acquainted with the ideas of nationalism, freedom movement, liberty, colonialism etc. Few women like Sabitri Devi Lepcha, Putalidevi Lama Poddar and Maya Devi Chhetri joined the freedom movement along with the male freedom fighters from hills. Though many of them were not able to complete their formal education, were highly inspired by the new wave of modernization. Savitri Devi alias Helen Lepcha is still considered an inspiration for hill women for her political spirit and courage. Putali Devi Lama Poddar established a Harijan school, which functioned as a night school. Seven women members including Putalidevi opened Mahila Sanstha, Kalyan Samaj for social upliftment of women and Dhinhin Mansoor Samaj for the workers (Poddar 1997: 33). At the above-mentioned night school, she used to teach basic writing skills. Maya Devi Chhetri also has a very inspiring story. Influenced and supported by her husband she educated herself and joined politics. She urged the hill women to resist the colonial authorities and fight for freedom (Lama

1988: 20). Eventually, she became the Member of the Upper House of Parliament. This testifies to the fact that slowly the Hill women started to become conscious about their political rights and duties.

While exploring themselves with western education, hygiene, health issues and sanitation had been also become matter of grave concern for them. Such education had hardly been sufficient to produce native doctors, but at least general nursing, anesthetic and midwifery trainings were provided to some of them. The Charity Hospital had 13 native nurses in training to look after infant welfare centers at Kalimpong and antenatal clinics providing milk, cod-liver oil to the undernourished and tuberculosis infected children and instructing parents about hygiene (Eastern Himalayan Report: 1918). These trainings helped them in widening their minds in the field of modern medications rather than confining themselves to superstitious healing process.

Conclusion:

It is seen that by the end of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century, the hill women had slowly started to experience the influence of modern education. Though the negative impacts of patriarchal society, superstitious beliefs, religious fervent, along with various geographical and economic factors pulled the women down, but newly emerging positive wind encouraged some of them substantially. This positive wind was provided by the religious missionaries and the roles played by some Bengali *bhadramahilas* must not be underestimated. It is of no doubt that the modern education had a modest beginning. However, we cannot deny the fact that the independent consciousness and awakening had touched the hill women. These women slowly started coming out of their shell and began to understand the nature of changes emerging in the outside world.

Although the modern education did not bring about sudden transformation, but despite of its shortcomings the foundation stone for the emancipation for women education was made by colonizers, educated natives and missionaries. Though different ethnic communities provided some sort of social and economic liberties to women but those cannot be comparable with the freedom, a woman can achieve after acquiring formal education. The modern education can make women well-aware about their rights and duties. Such rights in some forms were though present in the social and economic structure of pre-colonial Darjeeling, position of women had remained a subordinate one. Education provided them with strong pillars to strengthen their position in the society. However, hill women faced huge challenges in educating themselves and the lesser opportunities enjoyed by them than men cannot be doubted. The government effort was comparatively negligible. It is also quite interesting to note that the situation of hill women was not similar to the rest of Bengal. Unlike other parts of Bengal where educated men were quite supportive in women emancipation colonial Darjeeling showed a different picture. The native men of hills were intellectually not in such a position to support women. They were also still in the process of learning about the outside world. Despite all the hindrances, some women could make

their way to attain knowledge and could bring about new vision into their lives. Though slower than the rest of India, the evolutionary process towards upliftment of women began with it. The hill women travelled a long journey from living under the shadow of the male members of their family enjoying their limited rights to establishing their own position in the society.

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