

Indian Women in the New Age

OR

WOMEN IN YOUNG INDIA

*With a foreword by the Maharani Gaikwar
of Baroda*

BY

T. S. RAJAGOPAL, M.A., LL.B.,
MYSORE



MYSORE CITY
PRINTED AT THE JAVA STORES
1936

PREFACE.

EVENTS are moving with great speed. Old order is giving place to new. What was considered a few days back as the fantasy of a minority is a reality to-day. Bolshevism which came as a brutal shock in 1918 is almost a house-hold word to-day. Fascism which was considered as an expression of national and racial egoism, of brutality and violence, of militarism and suppression, in 1920, is to-day adopted and adored in two of the leading countries, being advocated as the expression of national re-birth. In almost every other country Representative Government is being adopted in preference to Absolute Monarchy. Such momentous changes could be seen in the economic field too. Communism or Fascism is an open challenge to Capitalism. Planned Capitalism is another alternative suggested. Labour is every-where gaining power and prestige. Socialism is a growing power to-day throughout the world. The traditional forms of thought, the unquestioning faith in antiquated ideas and the unflinching adherence to

old-world dogmas are no longer to be found. Thus changes could be discerned not only in the political but also in the economic, social and religious outlook. These changes are the results of changes in times and changes in circumstances. India lags very much behind the other Nations if judged in the light of the above observations. It is particularly so with the position of women in young India. This backwardness of our women is our own creation, for their condition, in some respects, was much better during the Vedic age than at the present day. Changes in time necessitated changes in circumstances. Just to give an instance, the frequent invasions of the foreign invaders might have necessitated the introduction of the system of early marriage and the system of Purdah. But should they not be removed even after the grounds for such an apprehension are removed? Men have not removed them because either the artificial atmosphere that is created is favourable to them or they have not given a correct interpretation to the Vedic Texts.

Consequently the energies and abilities of half the population of India are wasted. It is

just with the idea of picturing the present position of women in India and of suggesting improvements in the light of the progress that is made by women of the other progressive countries that this book is written. When we have deliberately deprived our women of their birth-rights and when we have purposely chosen to treat our so-called untouchables as our inferiors, though in both these cases it is in our hands to improve them and to restore them to their just and rightful position in society, how could we, in fairness, question the attitude of the foreigners in the matter of colour-bar and racial prejudice. The object of writing this book will have been achieved if the position of women in India is improved and they are given a status equal to that of men.

In preparing this book, I have kept in view the ideas and tendencies of the orthodox, the moderate and the radical. They all want reform, but some through legislation and others through educating the public alone. I personally feel that we cannot afford to wait till that millennium is reached when public opinion will have been sufficiently educated

to welcome reforms without opposition. For this reason I earnestly plead that the Government will co-operate with the people, instead of adopting a policy of neutrality in social and religious matters.

It is my most pleasant duty to acknowledge my deep debt of gratitude to Her Highness the Maharani Gaekwar of Baroda, for graciously consenting to write a foreword to this token of mine to the great cause. I also acknowledge gratefully the courtesy shown me by my publisher, the proprietor of the Jaya Stores.



FOREWORD

The author has taken a historical survey of the position of woman in different countries at different times with special reference to the position of woman in India, past and present. The book is full of information and research. It is refreshing to find the author championing the cause of women in all walks of life. He wants women to hold an equal place with men in political, social and economic life and points out to Russia and Japan where women are largely employed in all departments of life. He writes approvingly of the Baroda State legislation, by which the position of woman in respects of her rights in the joint family and her right to succession is greatly improved. He even approves of the Law of Divorce of the Baroda State and says that the State has gone ahead even of Mysore. He greatly deplors that the Government of India is not taking any interest in improving the

position of woman socially and legally. In matters of law he has gone a little too much in details. But on the whole the book is a refreshing, interesting and informing reading. In it the author has well championed the cause of woman. The author is very optimistic but time and education and travel can alone bring about a change in the mentality of the Hindus and Mahomedans. Deep-rooted ignorance, superstition and prejudice must disappear before the light of knowledge and men must be prepared to give up their long vested interests and do justice to the other half of humanity. The author is an advocate of woman's rights and deserves every encouragement. He has treated the subject so nicely that I cannot but congratulate him on his attempt.

H. H. THE MAHARANI GAEKWAR
OF BARODA.

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time did exist when social and religious customs dictated the standards of behaviour. The village was in every respect self-contained. Caste fixed the profession of the individual. Now circumstances are altered. Social opinion is powerless. Industrial Towns growing every where. Opinions of Pundit J. Nehru and Dewan Bahadur H. Sarda on the necessity of bringing about change. As we change with changing circumstances so too must our laws and regulations. Authority of the Dharma-Sastras to that effect. The franchise to be further extended. Good education necessary to make them good citizens. The benefits to be derived from bringing about these changes. J. S. Mill's dictum.