



PURDAH :
THE STATUS OF INDIAN
WOMEN

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LONDON
KEGAN PAUL, TRENCH, TRUBNER & CO. LTD.
BROADWAY HOUSE: 68-74, CARTER LANE, E.C.

1932



PURDAH:
THE STATUS OF INDIAN WOMEN

Printed in Great Britain by Butler & Tanner Ltd., Frome and London

TO FINELLA,

CREDIT FOR WHATEVER MERIT THIS BOOK MAY POSSESS,
BLAMELESSNESS FOR ALL ITS SHORTCOMINGS.

BUT FOR FINELLA

IT WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN WRITTEN

AUTHOR'S FOREWORD

It is expected that the present volume will be the precursor of a book envisaged but not yet written. I had hoped that an occasion would present itself for an early return to India, for the purpose of making on the spot a protracted study of the Indian Woman's Movement of this century, particularly of the developments of the immediate, most vital present. Pending this, I have acceded to the demand to share with others such knowledge as I have at my command.

It has not been my intention, within the short compass of this book, sharply to separate historical fact from legend, as both equally express the truths relevant to the present. Nor have I aimed at a consistent chronological presentation of later historical factors involved in the determining of women's position. The value of the book will lie mainly in a viewpoint and presentation conditioned by fresh personal experience; that, at least, is what friends think, who urge that my life has placed me in a position which leaves me comparatively free from the racial, national, or imperial bias to which most ordinary white sojourners in India are prone.

Born and brought up in Switzerland, I completed my academic studies at Leland Stanford University in California, then attended the California Institute of Art, and later went to India as the wife of a Hindu graduate in agricultural industries of the University of California.

In India, by virtue of this unusual position, I had the chance of being for eight years in intimate contact

with Indian family life in all grades of society and in many different sections of the country. In the welter of social and British-Indian problems and conflicts, it has been my endeavour to side not with partisans, but only with truth, as I saw it. This truth I tried to express in my former book, *A Marriage to India*, as well as in the present one. *Leap-Home and Gentlebrawn*, a series of linked tales to appear this autumn, will, beneath their superstructure of fiction, also be based on this foundation of actuality and experience.

I hope that in *Purdah* the exceptional opportunities that I have had of seeing life in India from an unusual standpoint may put before the reader a few new considerations, new angles of approach to the complex question of the status of Indian women. If I have succeeded in this, I shall be satisfied.

The appended list of books touching on the subject under consideration is in no sense a bibliography. I have merely included those few books to which I am, in varying degrees, indebted for refreshing my memory or for new information, hereby gratefully acknowledged. Beside the writers mentioned in footnotes, I have drawn particularly upon the works of Margaret Cousins, N. Macnicol and S. N. Dutt for biographical matter. My thanks are likewise due to those members of the Round Table Conference who have supplied me with information covering the three-year period since my departure from India, and to my many friends in India who helped me to my understanding of their Motherland long before any thought of recording it in writing crossed our minds.

F. H. D.

CAMBRIDGE,
March 1932.

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