

EDUCATION OF WOMEN

IN

INDIA

1921 - 1966

**EDUCATION OF WOMEN
IN INDIA
1921-1966**

DEDICATED
TO THE MEMORY OF MY MOTHER
CHANDRAKALA SHUKLA

EDUCATION OF WOMEN IN INDIA

1921-1966

BY

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FOREWORD

HISTORY as a discipline provides the background and perspective for an understanding of the present and a clue to its unfolding in future. *Education of Women in India 1921-1966* deals with an important aspect of the history of Indian education during an eventful period and throws abundant light on an outstanding educational problem.

At the dawn of Indian history women possessed a high social status and some of them were widely reputed for their learning. But the social, economic and political changes of later years lowered their position and gradually denied them their right of education too. The social code for women, their early marriage and seclusion restricted their life to home by the end of the eighteenth century. But the Indian renaissance in the following period increasingly touched all aspects and problems of national life, position of women not excepted, till finally under the inspiring leadership of Mahatma Gandhi it assumed the form of political struggle and social reforms in which women joined freely and shared equally with men the burdens and honours. With the coming of independence the Constitution provided them equality of status and opportunity and once more they regained their pristine glory.

When the subject of education passed into the hands of the Indian ministers in the provincial governments, educational activities got a fillip and popular issues like women's education received greater attention. It is at this point of the history of Indian education that the book takes up the thread and gives a fascinating account of the sometimes slow and sometimes rapid march of events in the realm of women's education under the care of provincial and state governments. The roles of various agencies namely government, local bodies, missionaries and other private individuals in the evolving drama have been brought out fairly well by the author.

The first three chapters provide a comprehensive background of conditions and forces influencing the education of women before 1921, and the next five chapters give a detailed survey

of the progress during diarchy, provincial autonomy and the first three Five Year Plans. Enough care seems to have been taken to make the account adequate, authentic and accurate, and the assessment of the contemporary forces moulding women's education is objective and convincing. In the last chapter the modern problems of women's education have been thrashed out. By focussing attention on the causes of disparity between men's and women's education and suggesting the remedies to remove the imbalances, the author has contributed towards a fuller understanding of a persistent problem which has loomed large in discussions on educational reconstruction in recent times.

The book contains a store of information collected from various sources which has been critically analysed and plausibly interpreted offering some valuable inferences. The author deserves thanks for enriching the treasure of educational literature of our country in this important aspect. The book, I am sure, will be immensely helpful to the students of education and history, as well as to all those who are interested in the cause of Indian education in general and women's education in particular.

Bhopal

12 November 1966.

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PREFACE

India is determined to plan her progress in all fields, and education is undoubtedly one of the most important spheres. All the initial three Five Year Year Plans, the first of which was drawn up in 1951, emphasise the importance of education and, in particular, the education of women.

The history of the education of women in India can be said to have begun in Vedic times, but the purpose of my research, of which this book is the product, was to study in particular the period from 1921 to 1966. During this period India has known many political, economic and social changes. All of these changes have influenced the lives, status and education of Indian women. I have also attempted to analyse the problems which surround the education of women in India today and put forward constructive suggestions as to how these problems might be solved.

The period begins after the Government of India Act of 1919. This Act introduced the 'diarchy' system, in which responsibility for the administration of education was transferred from central to provincial government level; a responsibility which the provincial legislatures took seriously, energetically developing the education of both men and women. Administration of the provinces became autonomous upon the passing of the Government of India Act of 1935 and continued to be so until Independence in 1947. The period ends in the year of publication. This is not accidental — it is the last year of the India's Third Five Year Plan (1961-6).

I take this opportunity to express my deep gratitude to the following : Dr. M. P. Sharma, D. Litt., Vice Chancellor, University of Saugar; Mrs. Muriel Wasi, Officer on Special Duty, National Council of Educational Research and Training; Dr. A. Misra, D. Litt., Director of Public Instruction, Government of Madhya Pradesh for kindly writing the foreword to this book; Dr. V. E. Moray, Ph.D., Education Officer, the High Commission of India, London and Dr. S. B. Adaval, D. Phil., of the Central Institute of Education, Delhi, for their valuable suggestions and advice.

My thanks are due to the librarians of the India House Library, India Office Library, and the Institute of Education Library, London, for allowing me to make frequent reference to their shelves during my visit to the United Kingdom in 1960-1. I am also grateful to the authors from whose works references have been made in this book and these are acknowledged at respective places.

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Lakshmi Misra

May, 1966.

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