

Arya Samaj and Women's Education

Kanya Mahavidyalaya, Jalandhar

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The Kanya Mahavidyalaya in Jalandhar was set up in the 1890s in response to the need to impart to women a special kind of education which would enable them to adapt themselves to the new demands made by the educated men of the family without losing their cultural moorings. It was one of the most successful experiments of its kind as well as the most daring and radical in its innovativeness. Its founder, Lala Devaraj an Arya Samajist and his supporters most of whom were women, faced criticism and attack from conservative opinion both inside and outside the Samaj. The battles they fought and the way the internal contradictions in the Arya Samaj theory and practice were resolved are significant because they are typical of the legacy inherited by women's education today from its nineteenth century beginnings.

THIS is a case study of the Kanya Mahavidyalaya, Jalandhar, one of the first girls' schools in the Punjab, which developed into a college and served as a model for women's institutions not only in the Punjab but in many other provinces as well. It was a product of the Arya Samaj religious and social reform movement which began in the late nineteenth century.

As such, the genesis of this institution, its early struggles, pioneering phase and later development shed light on the way the question of women's education was taken up and worked out by the Arya Samaj leaders and members. Like the other regional social reform movements in the nineteenth century the Arya Samaj movement was initiated by an urban educated elite, in response to the new economic, social and political forces set in motion by colonial rule. The town-based trading classes provided the social base of the Arya Samaj movement in Punjab. The movement took its inspiration from the teachings of Swami Dayanand Saraswati, who had called on Hindus to purify the Arya religion of later distortions by restoring its Vedic essence, and to defend it from attack by colonial, christianising forces.

While guarding itself against domination by the British rulers, the Punjabi elite simultaneously sought to adapt itself to the requirements of the country-wide network of employment created through the establishment of the colonial administrative apparatus. In fact, opportunities for social and economic advancement available to Indians were limited. British officials justified their monopoly of all top jobs on the grounds that Indians were an inferior people. They cited the rigidity of the caste system, the practice of untouchability, the cruel treatment meted out to women as evidence of the inherent inferiority of Indians. Hindu religion was a special target of attack. Contempt for Indian society assumed increasingly aggressive forms as some Victorian administrators undertook the "civilising" mission of British rule. The educated Indian elite, therefore, suffered not only from racial discrimination but also from expressions of scorn calculated to make them doubt their competence to manage their own affairs. The Arya Samaj effort at religious reform was in part a response to the British ideolo-

gical attacks on Indians as a backward people and on Hinduism as a major cause for their backwardness. It was an attempt to renounce those features of traditional society which seemed to obstruct their advancement. The agenda of the reform movement in general, and of its educational effort in particular, came to be defined largely by what the colonial rulers identified as the main weaknesses of Indian society.

WHY EMPHASIS ON WOMEN'S EDUCATION

Following the annexation of Punjab, and the resultant decline of the indigenous elite the indigenous education system suffered widespread neglect. There is some evidence that colonial rule resulted in a deterioration of women's situation, of which one symptom was the decline of education for women, as part of the general decline of indigenous education; G W Leitner, a British orientalist, in "History of Indigenous Education in Punjab", had observed that upper class Hindu and Muslim women used to receive some education at home or through religious institutions, and that a large number of women in princely states were found to be literate at the time of annexation.¹

The Education Department of the British government began to take some interest in opening female schools from 1862 onwards. But this effort remained very half-hearted largely due to the government's reluctance to spend more than a token amount.²

In any case, most upper class families were reluctant to send their daughters to government schools, because of the presence of male teachers and inspectors. It was women from the lower castes and classes who went to these schools because they were attracted by the stipends and the prospect of employment as teachers. This further strengthened the prejudice against government schools; upper caste parents were not willing to let their daughters be taught by Mower' caste women teachers. Thus, within no time, government schools began to languish and decay because of lack of support either from government or from local patrons.³

Simultaneously, however, the missionaries launched their own educational institutions. They were much more vigorous in their activity and much better funded. They received generous support from the govern-

ment, both financially and politically. Female missionaries also made special efforts to reach upper caste women through *zenana* (women's section of the house) visiting or house to house tutoring classes for women while the men were away at work. This provoked a sharp reaction; it was charged that the missionaries were out to subvert the stability and sanctity of the Indian family by their denationalising influence.

Another factor which appeared as a threat to the stability of the family was the situation with regard to widows. In 1881, 24.8 per cent of women over 15 years of age among all communities in Punjab were widows.⁴ Upper caste widows were in a particularly vulnerable position since they were restricted from obtaining employment outside the home and were also forbidden to remarry. The forms of home-based employment that had traditionally been available to them, such as handspinning, were on the decline, due to the flooding of the Indian market with British manufactured goods.⁵

Upper caste widows were, therefore, being forced into greater dependence on their families, which rendered their position very vulnerable. They were often subject to neglect and maltreatment and made helpless victims of sexual abuse. Contemporary newspapers are full of reports of how some of these widows were abandoned by relatives or condemned to such a miserable life that they were forced to fend for themselves. The reformers were alarmed by these phenomena. It seemed to them that upper caste widows constituted a readymade recruiting ground for prostitution which, they claimed, was on the increase in urban areas. Though the number of women who actually left home and were lured into prostitution is likely to have been very small, even stray cases evoked a near-hysterical response. An important reason for special concern with bettering the status of widows seems to have been the fear that if they continued to be maltreated, they would be compelled to seek undesirable escape routes, thus jeopardising the stability of the family structure. There were stray cases of women who had been victimised by their families being given shelter and protection by missionaries, who offered material incentives such as shelter, stipends for studying, and employment.⁶ For these

reasons, the question of women's education, came to assume a central position in the nineteenth century reform movement.

In a situation where men were rapidly taking to British education, the reformers argued that an educated man needed an educated wife. They argued that if women remained illiterate, they would indulge in foolish talk and unnecessary squabbles which destroyed the harmony of the family and encouraged men to look for companionship outside the house. Hence, men took to visiting brothels and courtesans. Education for women was advocated primarily as a means to bridge the mental gap between husbands and wives, mothers and sons. The conditions of seclusion under which these upper caste women lived meant that for the most part they lived in a world of their own. Enjoying very limited contact even with their husbands, they had been largely left to themselves to devise their own outlets within the repressive culture of the *zenana*. In the process, their thinking had become inaccessible to men. But this extreme form of seclusion no longer suited the new needs of the men. It became necessary for women to adapt their lives and attitudes to the men's requirements.⁷

With regard to motherhood, Samajists insisted that an illiterate woman could not be entrusted with the care of the next generation. Yet, they were wary of exposing women to missionary schools for fear of conversion and undue westernisation. There is a story from the life of Lala Munshi Ram, later known as Swami Shradhanand, which throws light on the Samajists' perception of the need for the Samaj to start girls' schools. One day, when Lala Munshi Ram returned home, his little daughter, Ved Kumari, came running to meet him, she recited a couplet she had learnt at the mission school that she attended: "*Ek bar Isa Isa bol, Tera kya iagega mol? Isa mera Ram Ramayya, Isa mera Krishna Kanhayya.*"⁸ [Take the name of Jesus just once, what will it cost you? Jesus is my Lord Ram, Jesus is my Lord Krishna.] Munshi Ram was horrified at the proselytising wiles of the missionaries. He immediately decided that Hindus would have to make women's education a priority if they wanted to preserve their culture and religion from the influence of Christianity.

The Samajists felt that Hindu girls needed a special kind of education that would enable them to adapt themselves to the new demands made by the educated men of the family without losing their cultural moorings. Even though, at one level, the Arya Samaj posed a challenge to the process of westernisation, it was also deeply influenced by the ideology of the rulers. The Samaj notion of a "modern" woman was modelled upon the Victorian ideal of womanhood.

This ideal postulated a sharp demarcation of private and public spheres—the man having access to both, the woman being by and large confined to the home. It was seen

as the woman's duty and privilege to welcome and sustain her husband when he returned home, exhausted from his battles in the harsh and competitive public world. She had to be educated enough to serve as his confidant, but not enough to pose any kind of challenge to him. She was to be all softness and submissiveness, love and patience, the "angel in the homes". She also had to be an accomplished entertainer so as to soothe his worn-out nerves by playing and singing to him—thus combining some of the qualities of a skilful courtesan with those of a dutiful home maker.

This role model had an immensely powerful influence on the minds of most Indian educationists of the nineteenth century. In effect, the new education introduced for women at this time sought to produce an indigenised version of the Victorian housewife rather than create any indigenous educational theory or practice.

The Beginnings of New Schools for Girls in Punjab

Nonetheless, a lot of creative energy came to centre around the new schools for women that were started in the 1890s. Since these schools were not constrained by government regulation, they provided a freer field for experiment and innovation. The Kanya Mahavidyalaya (Girls' Higher School) of Jalandhar was the most successful of these experiments as well as the most daring and radical in its innovativeness. From the beginning, its founder, Lala Devraj, and its supporters and active workers, a majority of whom were women, faced criticism and attack from conservative opinion both inside and outside the Arya Samaj. The battles they waged and the way the internal contradictions in Arya Samaj theory and practice were resolved are significant because they are typical of the legacy inherited by women's education today from its nineteenth century beginnings.

During the 1880s, the Amritsar branch of the Arya Samaj seems to have taken the first initiative in educational activity for girls. In 1885 it established three girls' schools.⁹ The Lahore, Ferozepur and Jalandhar branches also made similar attempts. The Jalandhar Samaj made three attempts to run a girls' school before they achieved success. In December 1886, a resolution was passed in the Anrang Sabha of the Jalandhar Samaj in favour of opening a *zenana* school for which they sanctioned an expenditure of one rupee per month.¹⁰

Lala Devraj's mother, Kahan Devi, took charge of it and classes were held in her home. The teacher, named Mai Ladi, had earlier worked in a missionary school. After some time, the Samaj stopped its Re 1 grant but Kahan Devi continued to finance the venture on her own. She paid the teacher Re 1 a month and four *chapatis* (unleaven-

ed bread) a day. However, the school had to be closed due to paucity of funds.¹¹ Another attempt, made in 1888-89 was also unsuccessful. In 1890-91, the school finally took off. By 1892, there were 55 girls on the rolls.¹²

In 1893, Lala Devraj and Lala Munshi Ram proposed that the existing primary school be expanded into a high school, a Kanya Mahavidyalaya, with a girls' hostel and a widows' home. A sub-committee was appointed to do follow-up work. After several meetings, they drew up a plan and sent it to prominent educationists all over the country, and made a general appeal for funds.¹³

This sparked off a debate which waxed fast and furious throughout 1894, between the two wings of the Arya Samaj—the Mahatma or Gurukul wing, supposed to be more orthodox, to which Lala Devraj and Munshi Ram belonged, and the "college wing", supposed to be more progressive, which was responsible for the founding of Dayanand Anglo Vedic (DAV) schools and colleges for men. It is ironical that the supposedly more orthodox wing supported "higher" education for women while the supposedly more progressive wing opposed it.

Although the opponents of women's education agreed that "higher", that is, high school education, could not be denied to women for ever, they argued that it was "premature, from a practical point of view, to think of giving high education to girls".¹⁴ The debate was sparked off by Lala Lajpat Rai through an article he wrote in the January 1894 issue of *Dayanand Anglo Vedic College Samachar*, The controversy was carried on in various newspapers of Punjab. A series of letters for and against high education for women appeared in *The Tribune* of 1894.

The opponents of the venture claimed that it would divert much-needed funds and resources from men's education. They felt that the further spread of higher education amongst men would gradually prepare the ground for women's education, but, at the present time, public opinion was not in favour of it. When the success of higher education for women in Bombay and Bengal was cited, they dismissed it with a wave of the hand: "Bombay and Calcutta are now able to produce a female graduate here and there (a thing in itself of doubtful advantage) . . ."¹⁵

The decline of government girls' schools was put forward as "evidence" of the fact that Punjabi public opinion was not prepared to accept the idea of women's education. The champions of the cause retorted that this was because government had not treated women's education as a priority. They also pointed out that "... to deny high education to our women is to deny them, as a class, any education whatsoever", since primary education for girls was depen-

dent on the availability of trained women teachers,¹⁶

The "college party" expressed great fear that higher education would lead to "over-culture" amongst women and unfit them for domestic duties. However, the Mahatmas hastened to assure them that education would be geared to producing better wives and mothers, and would not teach women to compete with men or to look for employment like western women, since no one was "seriously thinking of turning out ladies mistresses of arts... no sane person would ever dream of making his daughter aspire to that degree!"¹⁷ They continually repeated that "the education we give our girls should not unsex them".¹⁸

The Mahatma wing of the Arya Samaj was concentrating more on social and religious than on political and economic reform. Writers of this persuasion emphasised the need to free women from superstition and ritualism, so that they did not hinder the "progress" of the men: "Social reformers must by now have realised that it is our women who stand in the way of reformation and progress and it would be their education and that alone that will smooth the path of social reformer."¹⁹ They made much of the plight of the hapless man married to an uneducated woman. "Girls' education may be looked at from two standpoints of view. Firstly from the educated husband's point of view and secondly from the view of reformers of Hindu nation and Hindu people. The educated husband requires only to be taken into confidence and he will point to you the gloomy, dark and miserable life he leads at home ... 1b the reformer we can only say, marry an ignorant, illiterate wife and show me the record of pure ideas that you entertain and the deeds that you have done."²⁰ On this basis, they disagreed with the view of their opponents that women's education would cause "domestic aberration", "physical deterioration" of women, and hence, ultimately, the "annihilation of the race itself."²¹

While the debate went on, the Kanya Mahavidyalaya (KMV) was founded and began to make progress. The Mukhya Sabha (the managing committee), a registered society which was established in 1896 to control KMV, stated its purposes thus:

1b establish at Jalandhar City an institution, for the education of females called the Kanya Mahavidyalaya, with the following purposes:

(a) To impart physical, mental and Religious instruction.

(b) 1b give instruction in handicrafts such as needlework, plain sewing, etc

(c) 1b give instruction in household economy, such as cooking, etc.

(d) 1b give instruction in hygiene and elementary rules of health.

(e) Training of females as school mistresses.

2 To encourage and produce literature in

Hindi and Sanskrit for the use of females.²²

From the beginning, many women devoted their efforts to promoting the school. Students became fund raisers, workers and, later, teachers, facilitating its growth/This process demonstrated vividly that women could in fact do many things which certain sections of the Samaj had doubted their ability or willingness to do. Lala Devraj's ideas underwent a definite change as he worked with a large number of women in a range of activities in and around KMV. Thus, the institution developed into more than a school. It became a catalyst for various kinds of change relating to women in Punjab.

THE PRIME ARCHITECT OF KMV

Lala Devraj, the main architect of KMV, belonged to the well known Sondhi family of Jalandhar. Both his father, Lala Saligram, and his grandfather had served as honorary magistrates. The second of five children, Devraj was born on March 3, 1860. He was a sickly child but was his mother's favourite. Throughout his life, he was devoted to his mother, Kahan Devi, and always declared that his work for women was inspired by her life of selfless service, generosity, broadmindedness and simplicity.

Devraj was educated first in a mosque school and later in a mission school. As a young man, he had a circle of friends who were imbued with nationalist fervour. Amongst them, he was known as Mr Liberty, and also as Satyaprakash (light of truth). His brothers, Hansraj and Bhaktram, and his brother-in-law, Munshiram, who were among his close associates, went on to become luminaries of the Arya Samaj. At the age of 23, Devraj took a vow to use only *khadi*. He kept this vow all his life. From an early age, he began to maintain a diary which also became a lifelong habit.

Unwilling to take up government service which, he believed, would inhibit his freedom, he helped to manage the family business of money Lending and zamindari. His first foray into social activism was the establishment of a *Deshonnati* (national upliftment) Fund in his community. He did a lot of travelling and public speaking to raise money for this fund which was to be used for religious reform. He also started in his house a youth club which met regularly to discuss social issues. Devraj himself was the most active member of this club, which, in 1883, was transformed into the Jalandhar wing of the Arya Samaj.

He was married young and had five sons and a daughter, Gargi, who died at the age of 17, to his great grief. He was deeply attached to his wife, Sundari, and undertook her education with zeal. She soon became capable of running the women's wing of the Arya Samaj and later participated actively in KMV activities, serving for years as manager of the Widows' Home.

In his student days, Devraj began writing

for local newspapers. At various times of his life, he edited the *Kesari*, *Saddharm Pracharak* and the *Sahayak*. He made a notable contribution to Punjabi journalism, particularly to enhancing women's activity therein. To please his father, Devraj served as a Zaildar (supervisor of revenue collection and administration of a group of villages) for some years. He was also made an honorary magistrate. Although he was highly commended for his good work, particularly during plague and other epidemics, he felt extremely uneasy at the pressures he had to face from government, administration and police. He resigned during the Khilafat and Swaraj movement of 1920, noting in his diary that "A man who is not adept at flattery and servility cannot be an honorary magistrate!"²³

He remained an opponent of British rule throughout his life. His diary is full of laments over the oppressed condition of India and Indians who, he wrote, were treated worse than dogs by the British rulers. He was a supporter of the Indian National Congress, attending its sessions and aligning his constructive work with its principles.

When Devraj joined the Arya Samaj, he had to face a lot of opposition from his relatives, particularly his father, who was a Sanatani (orthodox Hindu), although he had his mother's support. Once, he even left home and proceeded towards Rangoon but was recalled from the ship by a telegram and messengers sent by his father.

The Jalandhar Arya Samaj soon became the centre for Samaj activity in the Doaba. Devraj travelled widely in and outside Punjab, speaking, raising funds, conducting *shuddhi* (purification) campaigns, integrating low caste people into the community, and countering Christian mission activity. He raised large sums for the DAV college, Lahore, and initiated propaganda work at fairs, festivals, grain markets and other public venues. The Hindu religious establishment, particularly the brahmins, bitterly opposed Samaj activity, especially the participation of non-brahmins like Devraj. He always met such opposition in a courteous, gentle but firm manner and eventually overcame it.

As the Samaj grew and power struggles began to emerge within it, Devraj, although often acting as peacemaker, distanced himself from it, and immersed himself in activities related to women in and around KMV. For the rest of his life, until his death at the age of 75, he treated the women's cause as his mission or *dharma*.

Devraj's first principle in running KMV was the parent-child relationship between him and the girls. He personally concerned himself with every aspect of their lives, and tried to maintain an intimate relationship with each student and her family. His experiments in promoting women's education and women's freedom earned him acclaim but also much hostility. He was accused by

other Samajists of acting as a corrupting influence, and also of trying to become the all-in-all of KMV. At one point, the managing committee decided to replace him with two other Samaj leaders. Devraj was deeply grieved but refrained from fighting back. However, the KMV girls, their parents, and the teachers raised such a vociferous protest, some of them going on an indefinite fast, that the move had to be withdrawn.

THE KMV EXPERIMENT

The birth of the Kanya Mahavidyalaya, Jalandhar, inaugurated a new era in the history of women's education in Punjab, the subjective intentions of Samaj leaders notwithstanding. With this event, and the continuing controversies it gave rise to, the Arya Samaj movement for women's upliftment lost its homogeneity. To begin with, it was the college party versus the Gurukul wing. But if we take the growth and development of this particular Kanya Mahavidyalaya as a case study, newer trends and divisions within the Samaj movement become evident, which point not only to the great potential that lay within the movement but also to its inherent limitations.

The decision to launch this bold experiment was initially prompted by the desire to produce *updesikas* (women preachers) for *Vedpruchar* (preaching of Vedic philosophy) and "enlightened" wives and mothers who would further the cause of religious reform. Lala Devraj was convinced that the 'Arya Samaj would have made a lot more progress if our women had been with us ... I am therefore watering the roots ... when mothers will become Aryas, why would then sons not be good Aryas?'²⁴ For Lala Devraj, the nation's prime power was in the *Matra Shakti* (mother power). He sought to channelise this power for the regeneration of Indian society from its "abysmal ignorance".

THE NEW CURRICULUM AND THE LITERATURE PRODUCED BY KMV

In the Punjab, Lala Devraj was the pioneer of the kindergarten system of education. His innovative *hansi khel mein shiksha* (education through fun and games) sought to encompass the entire life of the child. The various school texts he devised for this purpose show the creative nature of the KMV experiment in its early days.

As the intuition grew beyond the parameters initially envisaged for it, Lala Devraj began to feel the need for a curriculum more suited to the girls' everyday lives. Since such literature was not readily at hand, he began to write textbooks specially for girls. The medium of instruction was a supposedly purified version of Hindi which they called *Arya Bhasha*, the language of the Aryas. In actual practice, it was a curious blend of Punjabi and Sanskritised Hindi with a tinge of Urdu.

KMV's role as a nucleus of educational

activity in Punjab and North India is nowhere more evident than in this contribution of Devraj who wrote most of the books himself and arranged for their publication and distribution. Some of the books later came to be translated into regional languages such as Marathi, Telugu, and Gujarati. In 1904, the Punjab and Central Provinces governments recommended some of these texts for their schools. This was a triumph for the KMV concept of girls' education. Lala Devraj was given an award of Rs 200 for his contribution to children's literature. The print run gives an idea of the wide reach of this literature: *Pahti Pathawali* (first primer) 70,500 copies; *Doosri Pathawali* (second primer) 43,500; *Akshar Dipika* (lamp of the alphabet) 4,000 (27th edition); *Patra Kaumudi* (a garland of letters) 20,500 (11 editions); *Katha Vidhi* (stories) 72,500 (16 editions); *Balodyan Sangit* (kindergarten songs) 34,000. The KMV sold these books from its own Sahitya Bhandar (bookshop).²⁵

In 1897 KMV also began publishing a magazine called *Panchal Pandita* (in later years, the KMV magazine was called *Jalvid Sakha* or friend of the Jalandhar school), which disseminated the message of women's education throughout Punjab. It was described on the title Page as "A monthly magazine of 16 pages Hindi and four pages English ... solely devoted to the interests of Indian women." It aimed at "serving as a handy periodical for educated ladies and young students!"²⁶ It was packed with information about the experiments being conducted at KMV. Many other branches of the Arya Samaj, reading about these successes, were inspired to open girls' schools modelled on KMV. By 1918, there were more than 104 *pathshalas* (schools) following the KMV syllabi. Several government schools included *Panchal Pandita* in their curriculum in addition to the KMV texts.²⁷ It was thus fairly successful in fulfilling its original objectives; "Of furnishing good reading matter to our sisters, cultivating their mental faculties by... widening their interests by giving them a view of the world outside the closed *zenamas*, and of infusing in them liberal sympathies and elevating ideas!"²⁸ While Devraj did a substantial amount of the writing in the magazine, some of it under pseudonyms, many students and teachers were also involved in the editing and writing, and the magazine thus became a forum for women's creative writing.

The education imparted the government and mission female schools had been mainly a process of learning by rote. On the other hand, "modern" education for boys had been equally mindless in its own way since it was oriented only towards producing an army of clerks. In contrast to both these, the education at KMV was multidimensional. It sought to inculcate a new perspective towards life and to permeate with that perspective even the smallest and most mundane details of everyday existence. For in-

stance, *Balodyan Sangeet* for the second standard is a compendium of nursery rhymes of which the following is a sample. "Kanghi" (comb) gives children elementary lessons in hair hygiene; "RoomaT (handkerchief) is about the need to carry a handkerchief in order to stay clean; "VyayanV" (exercise) dwells on the need for exercise; "Pustakein" (books) on books as good companions; "Snan" (bath) on the merits of daily bathing to ward off all diseases; "Vayu Sewan" (getting fresh air) on the benefits of an outdoor life; "Mitti" (mud) is on the uses of earth and soil but does not forget to remind its little readers that mud is not meant to be eaten; "Bhut Bhutni" (ghosts) is an attack on superstitious fears of children, telling them that such fears are born of people's ignorance and illiteracy, so it is the duty of educated children to attach this form of obscurantism; "Bhojan" (food) emphasises the need for a balanced diet and teaches how to manage the kitchen efficiently; "Desh Prem" (love for the country) prepares the girls to be ready to sacrifice their all for their country.²⁹

Likewise, "*Doosri Pathawali*" for students of class three gives similar messages through the story form. "Gudiyon ko gali" (Abusing dolls) is a piece on how bad habits such as abusing others may be picked up in small, seemingly harmless ways; "Supatra aur kupatra ko dan" (Alms giving to the deserving and undeserving) is a piece on "enlightened charity" and the superiority of *vidyadan* (the gift of learning) over all other forms of giving and charity; "Lagatar kam karna" (working continuously) teaches the students to be industrious and persevering; "Itni si chori" (a petty theft) is a story about the disastrous consequences of small irresponsible actions; "Rogiyon ka poshan, Rog ka karan" (Nutrition for invalids; causes of sickness) and "Rogi ke Scva vidhi" (Methods of nursing invalids) are tracts propagating a scientific attitude towards disease and its cure. Finally, as in all KMV textbooks, there are a few lessons on patriotism and nationalism, such as "Janani Janmabhumi" (Motherland) and "Swadesh preeti" (love of one's country).³⁰

"Pathshala ki Kanya", (Girls of the school) another book written by Lala Devraj, has several chapters on household duties, punctuality, cleanliness, and women's dress.³¹ *Stri Darpan* (Mirror of women) is a kind of housewife's guide focused on household management. *Stri Dharma Niti* (women's duties) equips the girls with the whole Arya Samaj ideology on their "special" role as women in family and society.³²

"*Patra Kaumudi*" offers a more interesting example of the role models held up before the KMV girls. The book is a nineteenth century version of 'Letters for all occasions'.³³ The sample letters have a wide range, from application for scholarships to letters ordering books, invitations to Samaj functions, sick leave applications, reminders to the

washerman to deliver the wash, letter to a station master asking for a copy of the railway time table, letter ordering crates of oranges, letter to a domestic servant ordering him to rejoin duty immediately, letter to the doctor describing symptoms of disease, application for employment, letter to the *pandit* (priest) asking him to come over for a consultation, letter to a shopkeeper placing an order for monthly provisions, letter asking for a subscription to a magazine, letter to a sister asking her to send a particular kind of rose tree, letter to a younger sister rebuking her for her untidy handwriting. There is also a whole section on letters pertaining to school management, obviously intended for future teachers whom KMV hoped to produce.

The range, content and style of these letters suggest the changing roles within the family for which the girls were being trained. The emphasis on "good breeding" and "good mannerisms" points to the inevitable pressure for westernisation to which the Punjabi urban educated family was subjected. The ideal of the Victorian housewife loomed large on their mental horizon. The letters do, however, help the girl handle her immediate environment, so that she does not feel completely lost in a fast changing urban milieu.

The same principle of education-enlarging consciousness starting from the student's immediate environment, needs and preoccupations—is visible in the geography, history, natural science courses as well. Geography was introduced in the second class. The course for this class was "Knowledge of the four directions, and to identify important places from the map of the KMV campus! For the third class, it was "General information on the geography of your city and district." In the fourth class, it went on to "Geography of Punjab", in the fifth, to "Geography of India", in the sixth, to that of Asia, and in the seventh and eighth to that of Africa, Australia, South and North America, New Zealand and Europe.³⁴

History was started in the sixth class, with "Ancient Historical Tales" and was continued with "Tales of Musalmani Times" in the seventh, and the History of India in the eighth and ninth classes.³⁵ Scouting, gardening and botany were all combined in one—a refreshing contrast to present day textbook learning and lab-confined sciences, totally unrelated to daily life. The course for the eighth class was as follows: "trees: names of trees on the KMV campus; identifying leaves, flowers, seeds; information about when trees shed leaves, when they flower, the uses of wood and the planting of trees; Flowers: how to plant them; knowledge of different flowers and the seasons when they bloom; identification of flowers and leaves by their smell, keeping the eyes closed; making of bouquets and garlands; Grains: their kinds; sowing and harvesting; different kinds of manure; how to prepare them;

Fodder: kinds of fodder grown around KMV campus; sowing and harvesting; process of feeding animals; of drying and processing grain; Agricultural implements used for gardening and for agriculture. The girls were expected to observe life around them, live in interaction with it, and gather this information without the help of books.³⁶

Even more innovative was the introduction of physical exercises and games, in an attempt to impart "hansi khel mein shiksha" The emphasis placed on this aspect is obvious not only from the numerous stories, poems, essays, that Lala Devraj wrote around this theme, and incorporated in school texts, but also in the manner in which he devised ever newer ways of imparting it. The press held up KMV as a model in this respect for other schools the country over. One issue of the *Indian Social Reformer* reported on it:

One of the most interesting girls' schools maintained by native effort is the Kanya Mahavidyalaya of Jalandhar. In spite of its name, the instruction given in the school does not seem as yet to be of a high standard; but there are certain interesting features about it, one of which is that the girls are taught Veda Mantras (incantations) and are made to perform Sandhya (evening prayer) contrary to the orthodox Hindu view that the Vedasara (essence of Vedas) is not meant for women and Sudras (below the twice born castes)... The following description of a game, which combines physical exercise with moral instruction, is from the pen of a visitor and may be read with much interest:

Twelve girls form themselves into a circle, hand in hand representing Time or the dial of a clock. Two girls stand in the midst of the circle and act the part of fortune-tellers. Two more come, one after the other, and with folded hands ask questions about their fate. To the first one, the fortune-tellers address: 'O daughter, tell us something about your life and how you spend your time.' 'People call me a good girl,' she answers, 'I rise early in the morning, wash my hands and face, do household work with great diligence, attend the Pathshala regularly. I speak the truth and obey my parents! Thou good girl, thou hast a bright future before thee and thy life is long' is the soothsayer's reply. Immediately after this, the circle begins to move on, and whirls round and round, the girls singing, all the while, a beautiful song in praise of those children who make the best use of their time. The same question is put to the other girl. But as her life is spent in idleness and constant neglect of household duties, the soothsayers, of course, have to tell a different tale, foreseeing in her case, nothing but a gloomy future and a short life full of endless misery. The circle moves on again, the girls spinning round and round as before, but their song this time is something woeful. This is one of the numerous games, and they give so much fun and mirth to the little girls that even the silliest among them do not think it hard to attend the Pathshala.³⁷

There was an attempt to combine various elements of different systems of education

which would together make a "successful housewife". "Sufficient attention [was] given to the teaching of the science and art of cookery in the school!"³⁸ Needlework, plain sewing, domestic economy, hygiene, nursing, gardening, papercraft, were important subjects. Sewing started from class two. The syllabus prescribed plain sewing and handkerchief making. By the time they reached class ten, the girls had learnt to darn socks, tailor shirts, pyjamas, petticoats, and do all kinds of fancy embroidery as well as knit sweaters, knickers and blouses.³⁹

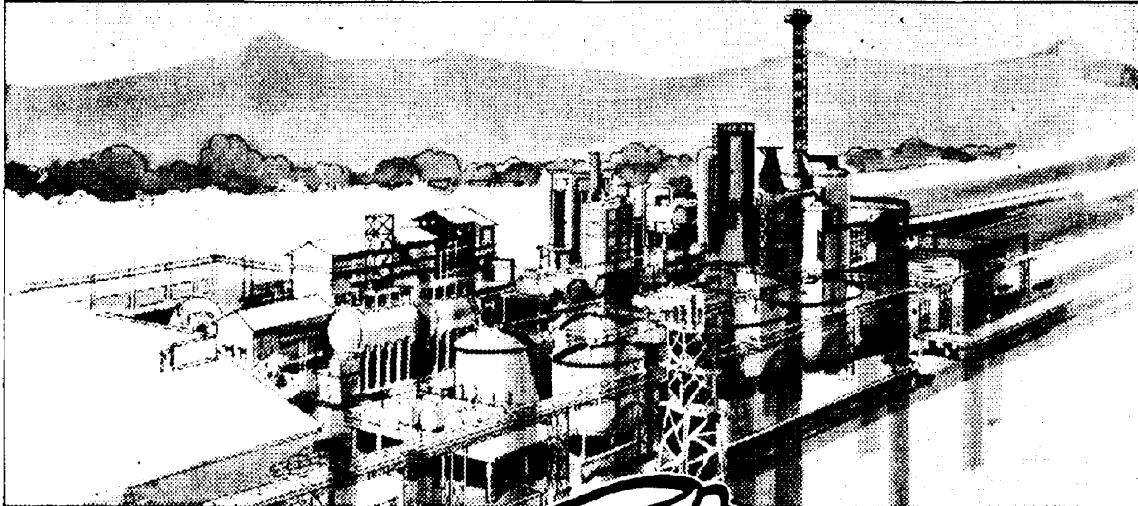
But Devraj did not stop here. His ideal of womanhood was beginning to undergo a radical transformation as is visible in the career of the fictional heroines of *Panchal Pandita*. One of these women is Suvrita who is described as a healthy, intelligent woman who freely and confidently mixes with men.⁴⁰ Another ideal type is Suri Suvira. The name was coined by Devraj and she became a near-mythical figure in KMV lore. When writing about the suffragist Lucy Stone Blackwell, Devraj gave her too the name or rather the title Suvira (brave woman). This name thus came to symbolise a new role model with whom the girls were encouraged to identify.

Panchal Pandita propagated the view that women's education was not charitable work but a vital nation-building task, part of the regeneration of enslaved India. Biographies of outstanding western women end with the hope that KMV girls will prove as illustrious, intelligent and scholarly.⁴¹ Thus, the story of Elizabeth Fry ends with the fervent hope that the women of India will perform an even greater task than Fry did, by reforming India's homes, which are like prisons.⁴² The writer of this series of life sketches begins with a passionate appeal to the reader not to read further unless she is making an effort to become like the women depicted. The girls of KMV are specially addressed in this appeal.⁴³

A game which goes much beyond conventional moralism is reported in the February 1903 issue of *Panchal Pandita*. It is called *Suvira* and is about a warrior girl who is not only brave in defence of her rights but can also wield modern weapons.⁴⁴ In this game, the girls used crackers to simulate the gun battle fought by Suvira. The same issue lists other games such as *Hath Pehchan* (hand recognition), *Rang Pehchan* (colour recognition), *Chun Chavav* (choices) which combine physical exercise with the development of mental concentration.

It is evident that a conscious effort was made to foster the sense of self in the girls. The reader is addressed in the feminine gender, and there is a definite sense of the togetherness of women even though the authors are often men. The readers are often addressed as sisters and are exhorted to base their friendship with each other on common ideals and common work in the women's cause.⁴⁵

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"Moral instruction" received "good attention" too, as a contemporary observer approvingly remarked.⁴⁶ Hymns and bhajans were specially prepared for the girls by Devraj, Mai Bhagwati and others. Religious education in the tenets of "reformed" Hinduism was an integral part of the curriculum. The girls had to be well versed in the "principles of Arya Samaj", *Sandhya ucharan* (utterance of evening prayers) the *Ramayana* and *Satyarth Prakash*. They were also expected to be familiar with *Manu-smriti*, the *Gita* and a smattering of the *Vedas* by the time they reached class ten.

Performance of the *havan* (purification ritual) as prescribed in the Arya religion was taught from class four upwards. This knowledge was imparted not only to make "good Arya mothers" but also in the hope of producing good *Ved pracharikas*. Girls were systematically trained in the art of *Ved prachar* and in giving lectures on *Arya dharma* (way of life of the Aryas). This is mentioned as part of the syllabus for Snatika Vibhaga or classes eleven and twelve. The KMV students with their *vyakhyanas* (lectures) were a common feature at Samaj functions all over Punjab.

Lala Devraj with his KMV students thus came to constitute a special wing, a women's wing, of the Arya Samaj. It goes to Devraj's credit that he played a crucial role in providing *pracharikas* (women preachers) and acted as a catalyst in the establishment of a whole chain of Stri Samajas (women's associations) and Kanya Pathshalas (girls' schools). When he began the practice of taking his students to attend Samaj functions all over the province, the initial response of fellow samajists was a hostile one. The first such instance was in 1897, at the function of the Ropar Samaj. But Devraj continued undaunted.⁴⁷

After a visit to KMV, the Director of Public Instruction wrote on January 22, 1918: "I cannot help observing what a relief it is after visiting some boys' schools, in which the shadow of the examinations seems to darken all the school life, to come to an institution in which examinations are of small account and a wholesome, useful and pleasant life is the object for which the pupils are prepared."

REFORMING THE WOMEN

In KMV propaganda or *prachar*, education was seen as the panacea for most of the ills that womankind is heir to, such as child marriage, high female mortality and prostitution. The logic was simple. Child widows were the most vulnerable to a "life of vice". If people started educating their daughters, there would be no child widows and hence no need for women to stray and "corrupt men". If women married young, before they were fit to be mothers, they were likely to ruin their health and that of succeeding generations.

Women's wastefulness in their love of or-

naments was criticised. They were taught to appreciate the aesthetics of austerity. Articles such as "Kurup na bano" telling women that, excessive ornamentation made them look ugly, were quite common. KMV girls were especially discouraged from wearing ornaments and this was mentioned in the prospectus. But this was only during school life. It was customary for a married woman to wear jewels and KMV girls were expected to make the transition.

The question of reform in marriage rituals, especially with a view to promoting habits of thrift and controlling wasteful expenditure was a cause dear to the heart of the emerging commercial bourgeoisie in Punjab. *Punchal Pandita* is full of essays and stories which try to show the misery caused by pomp and show at the time of wedding and other ceremonies, and how families are ruined by it.

Dowry giving in itself was never attacked. However, extravagant weddings and giving of too much jewellery and fancy clothes was a butt of attack. The "ideal" daughter-in-law in one story is a girl who brings many books with her as dowry. Marriages conducted according to simple Vedic rites, both parties wearing *khadi* garments, and, sometimes, without dowry, were reported and highly extolled. However, to attack dowry *per se* would have inevitably involved raising the question of property rights for daughters, thus challenging one of the basics of patriarchy. The issue of women's property rights was never taken up throughout the period of Arya Samaj reform movement.

In the early years of the movement, a constant battle was waged against superstition amongst women. Some of the pieces written were not only hard hitting but also tried to promote a scientific world view. There was an attack on meaningless rituals and superstitious avoidance of certain foods by women. Customs such as women not wearing clean clothes for a whole year after a death in the family were also sharply criticised. The superstition regarding travelling on certain days considered inauspicious because of planetary configurations was denounced: "When a planet is eclipsed, it is believed to have set, that is, it rises with the sun and sets with the sun ... Why then are auspicious actions like marriages, and the comings and goings of women put a stop to? When Mars sets, ships do not stop nor do trains. Women's mobility throughout the world does not come to a standstill. Births and deaths continue to take place. What crime have Hindu women committed against the planet Mars, which is miles away from the earth, that when it sets their movements should be restricted? How perfectly have the selfish men befooled women! ... Break these irrational illusions on the strength of science, I assure you that Mars cannot harm a hair of your head."⁴⁸ Similar tracts exposed the folly of belief in ghosts and demons.⁴⁹

Stiyapa or *mrit vilap*—excessive mourning and beating of breasts by women on the occasion of death—was another object of repeated attack in *Punchal Pandita*.⁵⁰ It was stated that women almost looked forward to such occasions because they provided an opportunity for women to be together and release their pent up emotions, tensions and neuroses. But the Samaj wanted to substitute more 'enlightened' safety valves such as *bhajan mandalis* (hymn singing groups) and Stri Samaj meetings.⁵¹

Religious obscurantism amongst women, their willing exploitation by racketeering sadhus, their flocking to pilgrimage centres in spite of these places having degenerated into dens of vice and the singing of what the Samajists regarded as obscene songs by women at weddings, became some of the issues which they linked to the fight against ignorance amongst women.

WIDENING OF HORIZONS

The education at KMV not only for the first time exposed the upper caste woman to her immediate environment—natural, socio-economic, political—but also brought her in touch with worlds of whose existence she had never known—from that of country-wide examinations to that of international relations, commented upon regularly in the columns of *Punchal Pandita*, from that of scientific experiment (*Punchal Pandita* carried articles on such wide ranging subjects as "The Uses of the Lemon" to "Solar Energy" to "Volcanoes") to that of feminist struggles in USA and England.

In the attempt to produce the "modern" housewife, a whole lot of literature that gave lessons in hygiene and scientific attitudes towards disease was produced. The information ranged from child care to plague inoculation to personal hygiene. Arya ideology saw the chief role of the woman as reproducer of the race. Therefore, women's own health became an important issue in the interest of "race maintenance". Lack of physical exercise and fresh air, and ignorance of the right food habits were seen as the chief cause of disease amongst women, and the literature produced at KMV carried on a vigorous campaign in favour of physical exercise and exposure to fresh air for women.

Linked to this was KMV's campaign against Purdah which specifically concerned upper caste, middle class women. The arguments advanced against Purdah were that it had no Vedic sanction, that it prevented women from being helpmates and companions to their husbands as Sita, Yeshodara, Anasuya, Kunti, Draupadi and others had been. They were so ignorant that they could not protect their husbands and children from going astray. However, the protective and possessive attitudes towards women were not questioned. On the contrary, it was asserted that the real Purdah of a woman was her chaste spirit, her *pativrat dharma* (the vow

of wifely duties) not an external veil. Lala Devraj, never tired of insisting in his tracts on *Pehrava* (dress) that purdah or modesty must be observed in dressing. Photographs of KMV students show tiny girls swathed in full length garments. The only parts of a girl's body allowed to be exposed were the face, neck, hands and feet.

Yet there was much opposition by the orthodox within the Arya Samaj to innovations in KMV. The introduction of physical exercise and singing of songs at annual functions provoked much hostility. But the most controversial measure was the introduction of music and dance at KMV. These arts were supposed to be practised only by prostitutes and low caste women, *nauich* girls and *mirasis* (low caste entertainers). They were considered "unfit" for respectable women. Their opponents alleged that "the Pathshala people, by teaching girls to sing like Doms and dance like dancing girls, to exercise and exhibit these skills, are diminishing the glory of the nation".⁵²

The KMV organisers were ingenious at the art of culling out relevant passages from ancient authorities and scriptures to justify the innovations they were introducing. Evidence galore was cited such as the life of Mirabhai and other examples from ancient texts like the Mahabharata to prove that women in ancient times were not only adept at singing but could play instruments such as the veena, mridang, chikara and damru.⁵³ Upper caste respectability was sought to be lent to these arts: "Don't think that music is only for *mirasis* and low caste entertainers. Rishis and Munis (learned sages) sang, so did the Rajkanyas (princesses). Music became decadent when it got into the hands of the *mirasis*. Actually, it is meant as the special forte of high castes and Kulins (high-born) ... don't think that singing is a despicable activity. Always sing virtuous songs. Don't go to a place where you hear vulgar songs being sung. Just close your ears!"⁵⁴

The musical learning was advocated not just for its aesthetic value. It had other pragmatic "modern" uses as well: "The husband comes home tired. He is upset. If at such a time, a talented wife can play veena, sitar (musical instruments) or harmonium and soothe with her melodious voice, how much will the husband love her for that ... it's a pity women don't realise how much they can benefit men by learning music and how much more men will respect them for it. Also, by so doing, they can prevent their husbands from going to singing and dancing girls. When the Ganges flows in the house, why would they go in search of it?"⁵⁵

In September 1903, the *Panchal Pandita* congratulated a woman who passed the music examination of Calcutta University, and looked forward to the day when KMV students would become accomplished musicians.⁵⁶ The *Panchal Pandita* gave regular news of other music examinations being held

in other parts of the country.⁵⁷

Girls were also exposed to the outside world through educational tours, fund raising trips, participation in Samaj functions, and later, in nationalist functions. They were regularly taken for treks around Jalandhar and to various hill stations. In September 1903, even the girls of the orphanage were taken to Dharmasala.⁵⁸ Devraj was usually accompanied by one or more students when he went on a fund raising trip. The girls visited foreign countries and acted there as ambassadors of the KMV concept of female education. The progressiveness of these measures is evident only when they are seen in the context of the extreme conditions of confinement in which upper caste women lived from babyhood. They were kept in one quarter of the house, where the missionaries had tried to gain access through Zenana classes. It was considered unseemly for these women to cross roads or a marketplace to attend school. They could step out of the house only when heavily veiled: "Amongst the higher classes girls are so confined that the blessings of fresh air and exercise are unknown!"⁵⁹

Government schools, with their dark, stuffy classrooms and lack of space for the girls to run about, were only an extension of the unhealthy atmosphere of the women's life at home. The family's ignorance and superstition prevented women from gaining access to medical care. Many lives were lost because of families' hesitation to "expose" women - to the few available sources of medical care. The *Panchal Pandita* condemns such low valuation of women's lives and insists that student's need to disabuse their minds of such superstitions.

The Arya Samaj did bring about a certain change in the attitudes of men towards women, but mainly in the context of family relations. The kind of change witnessed in the Devraj household may not have been typical yet it became a model which many Samajists held up for others. Devraj's wife, mother and daughter were all active workers at KMV. This happened in the context where "it will appear strange to many people that Lekh Ramji used to take his wife to the open fields for walk and fresh air at sundown so that she would keep good health".⁶⁰

GOING BEYOND SAFE LIMITS

The KMV curriculum had initially been devised to meet what the reformers' thought were the needs of upper caste Hindu women. The founders of KMV emphasised their innovativeness in imparting Vedic education to girls even though this education was traditionally forbidden to women and shudras. KMV taught its students Sanskrit and prepared them for advanced Sanskrit examinations such as Pragya and Shastri, thus exploding the myth of women's mental incapacity to master certain disciplines.⁶¹

The experiment soon went beyond the safe limits prescribed for it by orthodox Sama-

jists. Pandit Lekh Ram, in his prize-winning essay in a competition organised by KMV on the subject of the means to popularise women's education, had argued: "When the Shastras allow the study of Vedas for women, the highest education possible or conceivable, then how can anyone deny higher education in other subjects to women?"⁶²

The contradiction here was apparent. On the one hand, girls were being sent up for examinations, so far the prerogative of boys, and were proving successful in these examinations but on the other, Samaj ideology was that they should be kept away from competition with men. Even while making certain concessions in favour of "modern" learning, all those influences which "bred a spirit of competitiveness" in women were sought to be avoided, the contradiction here was apparent on the one hand, sending girls to appear in examination, so far only the prerogative of boys, in which girls proved successful, and on the other, talking of keeping them far from competition. Arya institutions were geared, somewhat paradoxically, towards producing a modernised, educated woman "striding forward into the Vedic past."⁶³

INTRODUCTION OF ENGLISH

The need to introduce English was soon enough felt. As early as January 1902, Devraj began to propagate the necessity for girls to learn English on the grounds that since English was the Rajya Bhasha (state language) and a knowledge of it was becoming essential for men, it was imperative for women too to learn it so that a gulf was not created between men and women. He pointed out that women in Bombay, Madras and Bengal were learning English.⁶⁴ The English books studied in those provinces began to be stocked in the KMV Sahitya Bhandar (bookshop). The September 1906 issue of *Panchal Pandita* reports that girl students would from then on begin to study English from class five onwards, instead of later, in order to ensure greater proficiency in the subject.⁶⁵ A big storm of protest was raised by Samajists when the decision was announced. Through the year 1907, very lively controversy was carried on, both in the press as well as on all other available platforms. Justifying this step in the issues of *Panchal Pandita* and *Sahayak* during 1907, Lala Devraj advanced more radical reasons than the one earlier given. English was declared to be necessary for the following reasons:

1 To help women acquire a good knowledge of the laws of the land.

2 To equip them for efficient day to day functioning in modern life, for example, sending of telegrams.

3 When boys were studying English, it was unfair to deprive girls of the opportunity to study it.

4. English was indispensable if women

of the curriculum.⁸³ This was obviously in response to Gandhi's call to women for Swadeshi in the twenties. The prospectus also states that "all girls are treated alike and no caste restrictions are observed."⁸⁴ During the 1905 Swadeshi movement, *Panchal Pandita* was in the forefront of propaganda urging women to remember that with women's involvement, Swadeshi would spread faster.⁸⁵ It gave regular news of how women in Calcutta, Dhaka and Poona had become active in Swadeshi Prachar, and exhorted the women of Punjab to follow suit.⁸⁶ The January 1906 issue carried a lengthy article on how imported goods had destroyed local industry and drained the country of its wealth.⁸⁷

The national movement, by bringing women out from the seclusion of home into the mainstream of political activity, inspired K M V with new concepts of what women could do. Articles strongly advocating the participation of women in nationalist politics were a common feature. Women like Sarojini Naidu and Kamladevi Chattopadhyaya were held up as examples for other women to emulate: "These women are the foremost among those *devis* (goddesses) who have voluntarily left their homes and chosen to dwell in prisons, so as to rebuild the uprooted joyless homes of India"⁸⁸

The attempt to help women find their history and to point them to a future which was theirs to make was a radical breakthrough, as also the nurturing of a sense of identity as "Indian" and "citizens" in the girls, with duties wider than those in the family.

Interesting also is the gradual transition from the older role of women as supportive homemakers to the newer one of women as participants in the struggle. Several stories idealise the wife, mother or sister who keeps the home fires burning while the male fights heroically or languishes in prison. The woman is shown as willingly sacrificing her loved one for the country. In many stories, her patriotism is at second remove, embodied in the male, and encroaches on her life only through passive deprivation. Her role as defined in the family remains untouched; the "men must work and women must weep" syndrome persists with the men's work extended to include commitment to a cause and the weeping altered only insofar as the necessity to weep is now seen as not only painful but also glorious. This is exemplified in a story where the sister misses her brother on Raksha Bandhan (brothers' festival) day since he is in prison, but he is released just in time for her to be able to tie the *rakhi*—he is not only her protector but also the protector of the nation.⁸⁹

A poem "Bharat Vilas" (the prosperity of India) makes clear the link between women's cause and the national cause. It puts forth the view that the condition of India can best be uplifted by spreading women's education.⁹⁰

This nationalism is noticeably free from chauvinist overtones and is in fact imbued with a healthy respect for other cultures, as is also evident from *Panchal Pandita* news snippets which range from comments on the Russo-Japanese war to the latest achievements of women in the field of education in Ireland to a note about a woman in USA who had become a barrister, to the situation of women in Korea and political articles in *Jalvid Sakha* which include a very positive vision of Communism and another of Gandhism.⁹¹

In one essay, the author narrates "the amazing courage of a woman" in saving a drowning person while he, the author, was too bewildered to act. He goes on to hold up this woman as a model for K M V girls. India is compared to a drowning person. While the men of India are idle and demoralised, it is for the women to act—they alone can save the country.⁹² No opportunity is missed to drive home this lesson—several stories depict the woman saving her stupefied male relatives from danger, and the parallel between the home in danger and the country in dire straits is either explicitly or implicitly drawn.⁹³

When the national movement was in ascendance, as in 1905 or in the early 1920s, the earlier *Ved Prachar* gave way to nationalist propaganda. In 1905-06, the prayer that regularly appeared on the first page of *Panchal Pandita* was replaced by the famous Vande Matram. The content of the prayers too underwent a qualitative change. There were fewer conventional pleas for the instilling of "virtues" in K M V girls, and more prayers for the welfare of the nation, particularly for the uplift of Indian women, the young devotee asking for strength to help in achieving both.⁹⁴

Panchal Pandita was only reflecting what K M V girls were actually doing. They were regularly taken to the Annual Sessions of the National Social Conference where some of them delivered speeches.⁹⁵ At the 1921 Indian National Congress session, there were 70 K M V students among the Congress women social workers. In 1920, the K M V girls took an active part in the Satyagraha movement.⁹⁶ In fact, K M V girls and teachers seem to have been the first women political workers that Punjab produced.

In 1922-23, the K M V girls sent Lala Lajpat Rai a *rakhi* in jail at Dharamsala, along with some *khadi* garments that they had spun and woven with their own hands.⁹⁷ In 1916, Rs 150 was collected for the South African Satyagraha. Money was also collected for the Congress Relief Fund and to assist Japan in the Russo-Japanese war. The girls earned this money by selling handmade dolls, and thus the feeling of involvement was generated. They were slowly being made to relate themselves to larger movements, larger causes—national and international.

They were made to see themselves as con-

tributing to the national cause by studying seriously with the aim of educating women. Every little achievement of K M V students was lauded as a pacesetter one. As indeed it was.

The *Indian Social Reformer* carried several write ups on K M V, holding it up as a role model. K M V, it declared, was a phenomenon that inspired all those working for women's education in different parts of the country, because it was more than an academic institution. It aspired to produce a new type of woman by its pioneering efforts to enlarge women's role in social life.⁹⁸

When K M V girls were brought in touch with the national movement, another field, that of politics, one which had hitherto been closed to women, was opened to them. National leaders who came to Punjab usually spoke at K M V.⁹⁹ The buildings, bowers, gardens and pathways on the campus of K M V were named after prominent nationalist leaders.¹⁰⁰ The spirit of nationalism was in the air that the girls breathed at K M V, and Lala Devraj refused to have this spirit vitiated.

He resisted all pressures to accept government aid because the thought it would vitiate the atmosphere of "freedom" and "nationalism" that he assiduously cultivated. He preferred that his students have the right to sing the patriotic songs which had become an integral part of life at K M V, even if the price to be paid was that of sitting and studying under trees.¹⁰¹ In 1930, when during the Salt Satyagraha, women for the first time participated massively and actively in the movement, Devraj expressed his joy thus: "Whether India gets freedom or not, I have got mine. I have fulfilled my life's mission. My dream of seeing the Indian woman awakened has been realised!"¹⁰²

FREE FROM REGIONAL AND RELIGIOUS CHAUVINISM

From the beginning, the founders of K M V attempted to broad base their education and keep it non-sectarian. This, in spite of their links with and roots in the Hindu chauvinist Arya Samaj ideology. Lala Devraj travelled far and wide in the country, inspecting women's institutions wanting to learn from and draw inspiration from them. He started with the Victoria School in Lahore in 1895, and went on from there to United Provinces, Rajputana, Ahmedabad, Baroda and Bombay. He was determined to pick up the best from every sphere—from Christian to Muslim to government institutions.¹⁰³ The experiment at K M V was a synthesis of all these gleanings—and much more!

In terms of numbers, K M V did not make rapid strides. It grew slowly but steadily as is evident from the Table which shows the increase in the number of students in the school, the hostel and the widow's home.

It is significant that from the outset, K M V had a widespread appeal much beyond the

provincial frontiers. The figures for the Ashram or hostel for the year 1904-05 show this. There were two girls from Berar, two from Rajputana, eight from United Provinces, 34 from Punjab, six from Sindh, six from Frontier Provinces, and two from Baluchistan. By 1908-10 there were nine girls from Baluchistan, six from the Frontier Provinces, 27 from the United Provinces, one from south Hyderabad, six from Burma, three from Rajputana, two from Sindh, one each from Bombay, Assam and Bengal and 98 from Punjab. Soon after, girls started coming from as far as Fiji and Africa.¹⁰⁴

The logic of the KMV movement had kept Devraj away from the growing religious fanaticism of Arya Samaj activities. While others of the Gurukul wing were busy with Shuddhi campaigns and some of them were participating in communal riots, Devraj was determined to ensure that KMV remained above provincialism and communalism. He went out of his way to enable girls from faraway places to join the school. For instance, he answered a letter to the *Indian Social Reformer* written by a Madrasi gentleman, to assure him that girls from Madras were most welcome at KMV and would enjoy the same privileges as other girls.¹⁰⁵ The college magazines attempted to integrate girls from other provinces and countries by publishing their writings. This integration would not have been difficult since KMV girls had been taken on tours of Africa, Burma, Ceylon, and had returned with glowing accounts of how they had been hailed as representatives of an awakening India.¹⁰⁶

In spite of the unmistakable Hindu tinge of the institution, it never acquired the militant chauvinism of its parent body. The conflicting trends are evident. For instance, some of the Samaj office bearers who got involved in KMV administration, like Pandit Sharma, wrote long harangues on how Indian culture and language had gotten corrupted by Urdu influences. These articles were half-heartedly corroborated by Devraj. But the overwhelmingly dominant tone is not one of hostility. Devraj wrote extremely

laudatory pieces on Islam in *Julvid Sakha*, and said that he had been inspired by reading Hazrat Mohammad's biography.¹⁰⁷ In an attempt to establish *bhaichara* (brotherhood) with a neighbouring Muslim girls' school, Devraj started the practice of exchange of uncooked food between the students of the two schools on Hindu and Muslim festivals.¹⁰⁸ Guru Nanak's birthday was celebrated with enthusiasm at KMV.¹⁰⁹

CATALYST FOR CHANGE

KMV was just a girls' school and teachers' training school. It also undertook to "educate" women outside the institution, by reaching them directly or indirectly through *prachar* of various kinds.

Right from the start, KMV addressed itself to the task of training teachers. By 1910, KMV had produced 50 *adhyapikas* or female teachers who were working in different schools all over the province.¹¹⁰ By 1913-14, they numbered 86.¹¹¹ Devraj's message to his students was that "each one of our girls should become a Pathshala by herself so that not a single girl in this country should be left illiterate!"¹¹² Girl students, when they went home for the summer vacations, were encouraged not only to collect funds for KMV but also to take a pledge that they would educate at least two persons.¹¹³ Many students came back to do some honorary teaching at KMV. The September 1906 issue of *Panchal Pandita* lists 15 such ex-students who had vowed to devote themselves to the service of KMV without pay.¹¹⁴

While the schools at Bhaddo, Ludhiana and Kartarpur were opened as branches of KMV, there were many other Samaj schools which had a loosely affiliative character, insofar as KMV *pracharaks* had acted as catalysts for their formation. It was common for KMV students and teachers to visit Samajes far and near, to spread the message of women's education. The issues of *Panchal Pandita* are full of news reports about KMV girls having delivered lectures that inspired other Samajes to follow the KMV model.

WOMEN'S INITIATIVES AND SUPPORT

Various Stri Samajes came into existence all over Punjab during this period. These provided valuable support for women's education during its early years. Some of them ran their own schools and widows' homes. The few women who became regular *Pracharikas* created quite a stir in the province, and used to attract large gatherings of men and women wherever they went to lecture. Foremost amongst them was Mai Bhagwati whom Devraj called "our Isabella" (referring to the queen who financed and inspired Columbus' venture to the New World) and the "inspiring spirit behind this great venture", the KMV.

Mai Bhagwati was born in Haryana village, district Hoshiarpur, in the eminent Mehta family She was married as a child but displayed a strong inclination towards

self-education. At the age of 14 she began to learn to write from a Pandit. Her mother supported her in this but the rest of the family fiercely opposed her. When she went to her in-laws' house, she was severely persecuted on account of her learning. She was abused and her books thrown into the fire. So, at the age of 26, she returned to Haryana. Her brothers were very hostile to her but she pursued her studies and opened a *Putri Pathshala* (girl's school) in her house.¹¹⁵

Mai Bhagwati was one of the first travelling *pracharikas* of the Arya Samaj and, in her speeches as well as in her work, emphasised the need for women's education. In the early years, she stood up to a great deal of opposition, slander and abuse, but later, she became a highly revered figure in the Doaba. She edited the *Sahayak*, the first Hindi magazine in Punjab which was intended to "propagate the idea of women's education and call upon men to uplift the education of women". Mai Bhagwati was so honoured within the Samaj that the title "Fellow of the Arya Samaj" was attached to her name as editor of the paper.¹¹⁶

She was one of the initial workers and teachers of the KMV. She composed a number of *bhajans* which became popular amongst women. When she died at Haryana in 1899, the *Tribune* paid glowing tribute to her, and reported that thousands had followed her bier and every woman in Haryana had contributed towards the expenses of the last rites.¹¹⁷

Savitri was another woman who devoted her life to the cause. Widowed at the age of 10, she was brought to KMV by Devraj in 1894 when she was 14 years old. She proved to be a brilliant student. When her patron, Shri Hemraj, stopped her financial allowance, she had to discontinue her education and teach in a government school to earn a living. Five years later, when Devraj realised her predicament, he again went and brought her to KMV and arranged a scholarship for her.

Savitri was one of Devraj's favourite students. He dedicated a book to her, expressing the hope that she and others like her would water the KMV plant. His hopes were fulfilled when Savitri became one of the foremost workers, speakers and fundraisers of KMV. Sarojini Naidu is supposed to have acknowledged that she was inspired to take to public speaking after having heard Savitri speak.

In 1913, Savitri became the first woman principal of KMV. It was she who, inspired by a visit to Karve's Hingne Ashram, took the initiative to establish the widows' home at KMV. She was appointed its first manager. She served as assistant editor of *Panchal Pandita* and wrote regularly in it. She also published a book "*Indriya Daman*," (Repression of the senses). She introduced the practice of bestowing the Yajnopvita (holy thread worn by boys as initiation into

TABLE: INCREASE IN NUMBER OF STUDENTS

Year	Vidyalaya	Ashram	Vidhwa Bhawan
1891	8	0	0
1892	55	0	0
1895	77	5	0
1896	99	16	0
1897	134	22	0
1902	138	38	0
1903	134	60	0
1904	166	60	0
1906	183	85	6
1907	203	105	7
1908	203	105	11
1909	247	156	18
1910	297	165	19
1912	362	158	26

the scholarly life) on the KMV girls.

After her untimely death at the age of 35, she was remembered as an important role model for KMV girls. Her death anniversary was commemorated every year. The widows' home and a bower in the garden were named after her. Devraj regularly recalled her in the pages of *Panchal Pandita* and asked readers to emulate her spirit of selfless service, sacrifice, simplicity and devotion.

Lajjyawati, another pioneer, came to KMV at the age of six. Since she was the youngest child in the hostel, she was treated with special affection by Devraj who used to play games with her, give her pick-a-back rides and so on. As she grew up, she became an active worker of KMV. She served as a teacher, and later as vice principal, and principal. She chose not to marry and continued as principal of KMV throughout the decades following Devraj's death, until her retirement a few years ago.

FUND-RAISING—SELF RELIANT APPROACH

Lala Devraj believed that institutions which acquire a large permanent fund cease to require people's help and, therefore, become indifferent to people's opinions. He wished KMV to be dependent on people's spontaneous help, and was sure that support would be forthcoming. A scheme to enrol a fixed number of subscribers was drawn up but never fully executed. Instead, Devraj and the KMV women used to go on speaking and fund-raising tours throughout the country and abroad.

The school was started in a rented house. In 1903, a student, Parmeshwari, who had passed out with good marks, when offered a gift by her father, asked him to donate a piece of land for a building to be constructed for the school.¹¹⁸ This pattern of donations came to be a common one.

From the start, Devraj had collected money by touring and speaking on women's education. In March 1893, the Arya Samaj, Jalandhar, decided to use the proceeds of its *Atta fund* for the girls' school. This fund was constituted by each Samajist household giving a handful of flour every day. Some time later, it was decided that the proceeds of the *Raddi fund* would also be used for the school. Each Samaj family donated its old newspapers and junk to this fund. This generated substantial amounts of money. A manager used to be appointed for the *Raddi fund*.¹¹⁹

In August 1892, Devraj decided to place a *dampatra* (alms bowl) in the houses of well-off people. He started with the house of his brother, Bhakt Ram. Thus, the initial KMV funding depended on the goodwill of housewives. Devraj and others also went begging in the streets and marketplaces of Jalandhar. They collected money and clothes.¹²⁰

In 1893, Devraj attended the Congress session at Lahore. KMV literature was distributed and funds collected. In the same year

Devraj also toured Rawalpindi, Kohat, Bannu, Dera Ismail Khan, Muzzaffargarh and Multan. He spoke on women's education and raised funds. Soon, he began to take KMV students along with him as deputationists on these tours. Nearby places like Lahore, Lyallpur and Ludhiana were routinely visited.

In 1908, Devraj and Savitri went to Karachi. Both of them spoke at Khalikdin Hall and collected Rs 2,000. In the same year, a deputation toured United Provinces. They collected Rs 225 from Saharanpur, Rs 1,447 in Agra, Rs 900 in Gwalior and Rs 1,800 in Akola. Savitri was among the first women pioneers in this work. Alone she toured South India and Bombay for six months. She spoke at 26 different places, distributed 1,000 KMV reports and collected Rs 900. Her travelling alone aroused considerable amazement.¹²¹

In 1916, Lajjyawati and Devraj toured United Provinces and Calcutta. They collected Rs 10,000 in Calcutta, Rs 3,000 in Kanpur, Rs 2,000 in Allahabad. In January 1917, Lajjyawati resolved to collect Rs 50,000 and not to step into KMV before doing so. She was the first woman in North India to take such a vow. She toured intensively in Punjab. Devraj accompanied her most of the time. They visited Quetta and Karachi where Lajjyawati's speeches created quite a stir. At the end of the year, they went to Calcutta where Lajjyawati spoke at the Indian Social Conference and the Arya Samaj function. In January 1918, Lajjyawati fulfilled her vow.¹²² In November 1924, she started off on another long tour. This time, Lakshmi Devi, Shannodevi and Brijbala accompanied her. They got Rs 5,000 from Choudhri Chhotu Ram in Hissar and proceeded to Burma via Calcutta. They stayed 95 days in Burma and spoke in all the major towns.¹²³

Devaki Devi and Narayani Devi were also amongst the indefatigable fund-raisers. In 1929, the former vowed to collect Rs 10,000. At a 1928 meeting of teachers to discuss KMV finances, she had suggested that each teacher should raise enough funds to generate her own monthly salary as interest. She set out on this mission with a bag slung on her shoulder and easily fulfilled her vow. She also worked for years as an honorary teacher at KMV.¹²⁴ Narayani Devi vowed in 1930 that she would eat only one meal a day until she had collected Rs 11,000 which she managed within a year, by touring United Provinces, Madhya Pradesh and Bihar. In 1933-34 she went to Africa where she raised more than Rs 26,000. Shannodevi also raised Rs 100,000 during a tour of India, Burma and Africa.¹²⁵ In those days, public speaking and travelling were very much a male domain. KMV women and girls thus broke new ground in this aspect of their work.

While Lala Devraj tried his best to mobilise KMV students and teachers to raise resources for the institution through their own efforts, it is significant that those who

contributed to KMV's funds were mostly men of commercial classes and castes, some of whom had moved into government employment. Since this group provided the financial base for women's education in Punjab, it inevitably came to exercise key influence over the institution and also over the ideology of the Arya Samaj's educational effort.

The *dan suchis* or lists of donors regularly published in KMV organs and other Arya papers make this clear. In the February 1906 issue, *Panchal Pandita* published a list of donors in which 12 out of 48 were women; in August 1906, three out of 14 and in December 1905, 11 out of 40 were women. The trend continued in later years. In the March 1933 issue of *Julvid Sakha* nine women and 29 men were listed as contributors in cash or kind. The July 1934 issue lists eight women and 24 men in the donors' list. Moreover, women, on the whole, made smaller contributions of money in comparison to men. More significantly the regular contributors were mostly wives of *Lalas* or *Seths*, and it is possible that, in many cases, husbands made donations in the wives' names. Often, the women were old students whose fathers made donations in their names when they were getting married. It is not surprising that women's economic contributions remained relatively small, considering that not many women of this class are likely to have had any independent means of income.

The composition of the management committee also shows an overall domination by men of the commercial classes. In the 1932-33 annual report, there were only two women on the 15 member managing committee. All seven office bearers were men.¹²⁶ Most of the donors and members of the managing committees at different times are prefixed with "Lala" or "Seth"—indicating that they were traders or shopkeepers. This social and financial base of KMV helped ensure its long-term subordination to the needs of men of this class for educated, docile daughters and wives.

REVERSE TREND—OPPOSITION FROM THE GURUKUL WING

The direction taken by the KMV experiment was not palatable to the Gurukul wing who began to recoil in distaste: "By no means a mild opposition was offered by the college section people. Unfortunately, the other wing, i e, the non-college section (the Gurukul wing) also opposed the Vidyalaya movement on the ground of the alleged greater necessity for concentrating their attention and resources on Ved Prachar. Thus by force of adverse circumstances, it was early brought home to the founders (of KMV) that in order to be able to maintain a safe existence, the Vidyalaya must steer an independent course. It was in its earlier days controlled by the local Arya Samaj, and so in the light of experience, it availed of an

early opportunity to shake off that control. And hence we find that according to the current rules of the constitution not only have even non-Samajists sometimes been the members of its controlling body, but in pursuance of those rules there will always be scope for such membership which imparts to the controlling association a sort of all-India character.¹²⁷ However, the managing committee continued to be overwhelmingly composed of representatives of different Samajes, the number from each depending on how much financial assistance it gave.

In the mean time, the college wing, which had initially opposed the KMV leaders, began to move closer to their position. Lala Lajpat Rai openly admitted that he had made a mistake in opposing women's education. In 1919, Lala Hansraj prepared a scheme for women's education and discussed it with KMV leaders. Very soon, the DAV wing began to open women's colleges and high schools.

Within a short time, the Gurukul faction's journals began sounding the alarm. They had been, in any case, on the retreat from their earlier positions and had become much more conservative before the other sections of the Samaj followed suit. When *Panchal Pandita* announced that English would be introduced as an optional subject at KMV the Gurukul wing opined that their "hopes had been shattered" and that Devraj was despoiling the "Dharma of Stri Shiksha (women's education).¹²⁸ They saw a "very dangerous trend" in this: "We can't understand why Lala Devraj is again and again raising the question of trying to make men and women alike. Is it Stri Dharma to take part in political agitation?"¹²⁹ The opposition continued to mount. "Militant and pugnacious" extremists were reminded in the Special Ladies' Number of the *Vedic Magazine*, an organ of the Gurukul wing, that "there is a world of difference between equal rights and same rights!"¹³⁰ Women were destined by nature for motherhood and therefore, "need not be educated for a living or a profession" otherwise the vitality of the race would be lowered.¹³¹ While the KMV girls were competing successfully with boys in Shastri and Pragma examinations, the *Vedic Magazine* sought to convince women that physiologically, psychologically, anatomically, they were weaker than men and hence "women can compete with men neither in the intensity nor in the originality of intellectual work".¹³² Different curricula for men and women were therefore a must or else the result would be "unsexed monstrosities" of the kind which the "present system of education has produced".¹³³

Active participation in public life was totally ruled out for women: "Even highly cultured women cannot, on account of their physiological and psychic peculiarities and the all-absorbing duties of motherhood, be expected to serve their nation as politicians and administrators .."¹³⁴ This was around

the time Lajjayawati had toured the country and succeeded in fulfilling her vow to raise Rs 50,000 in a year for KMV, and women like Sarojini Naidu had acquired a prominent position on the national political scene.

The Gurukul wingers were convinced that nothing could be more mischievous than the "notion of complete equality of men and women!" Modern woman in the West might be more "free" but was not as "womanly". She had been "unsexed". They went on to say that "The modern woman's willingness to beat man on every point" was a dangerous phenomenon. It was only "among the savages ... that the sexes are less differentiated!"¹³⁵ But women seemed vindictively determined to enslave men, against the laws of nature, by trying to usurp the right of earning a living. Women trying to be suffragettes and attempting to usurp the function of man would spell the death of the nation.¹³⁶ Women in India neither "deserve or even less needs ... absolute liberty!"¹³⁷ Also, she has "no distinctive, independent individuality in Hindu social polity. From her birth to her death, she is a part of man".¹³⁸ Even purdah was justified on the grounds that it is her "seclusion, not imprisonment". It was argued that among the Rajputs, where purdah was most strictly observed, women enjoyed greatest freedom, respect and happiness. Their state could hardly be deplored as one of captivity.¹³⁹

DEFENSIVE BATTLES

From 1933 onwards, a stiff battle had to be fought with various sections of the Arya Samaj on the question of introducing university examinations in English at KMV. The parent body tended to pull it backwards even when the social situation demanded the next step forward. Those who had set the process in motion knew that "we cannot afford to shut our eyes to a rapidly growing demand for university examinations amongst the girls. The university diploma is how one of the qualifications of the girls intending to marry. It is the only support for those not intending to marry. Girls who wish to maintain themselves have so far the educational activities to turn to. They become teachers, some of them turn to Medicine. The widows study with the sole object of securing employment in schools."¹⁴⁰

By denying recognition to the KMV's internal examinations and its certificates, and refusing employment or admission to higher studies courses to those who had studied at KMV, the government managed to pressurise KMV into submitting to the roadroller of the official syllabus and examination system. This was one way in which the experimental quality of KMV's education system was gradually eroded. The KMV leaders knew that if the institution failed to respond to the pressures of the situation, it would stagnate: "It is a well known fact that the Education Department refused to recognise

our certificates for admission to JU and SV classes. Widows from the Vidyalaya failed to secure admission to Sir Ganga Ram Widows' Home, where the students receive government scholarships. Teachers holding the Vidyalaya certificates have been excluded from other Arya girls' schools on the ground that the [Education] Department [of the government] did not recognise the certificate. Is the Arya Samaj determined to keep their girls aloof from government scholarships and from the teaching or the medical lines? ... Even the Gurukul at Kangri has not escaped the innovation of the modern university system without ceasing to be an Arya institution ... in fact, the Gurukul is actually called a university."¹⁴¹

But this did not convince the opponents. Vituperative propaganda was launched against the KMV: "It started with the *Tribune* and was carried to the columns of the *Arya Musafir*, the *Prakash*, the *Milap*, the *Guru Ghanthal*, the *Vir Bharat*."¹⁴² It was argued that the "university examinations had an undesirable effect on the moral character of the examinees".¹⁴³ The specific objection was not really to university examinations *per se*, but to the Matriculation and BA examinations in particular—obviously, these would be the crucial steps toward putting women's education on par with men's education.

KMV champions remained adamant even though they made minor concessions. This was their idea of a compromise: "In the matter of university examinations, no inducements are held out to the students taking the university course. Preference is given to our own courses leading up to Snatika examination. All our permanent medals and prizes are for Sanskrit, Hindi, Dharmashiksha and other non-university subjects, not for English. It will be thus clear that the Vidyalaya holds out every encouragement to the girls taking the non-university course. But the question is whether the mere fact of the university course having been introduced in the Vidyalaya makes it non-Samajic."¹⁴⁴

The change that came with this attempt to keep KMV in tune with the times was a many faceted one. KMV students fared well in most examinations. In the Matriculation examination of May 1938, 24 girls appeared, out of whom 23 passed.¹⁴⁵ For the FA (intermediate) examination in 1935, seven girls appeared and five passed.¹⁴⁶ BA classes were started in the Golden Jubilee year of KMV.¹⁴⁷ The students not only travelled for *Shastrarths* (religious debates) to different Samajes in Punjab but also participated in inter-college debates and national conferen-

However, the introduction of university examinations brought a certain rigidity into the curriculum. From this time onwards, KMV began slowly to lose the role of a pacesetter. It began to make adjustments to the conservative demands of the commercial

classes, among whom it had its base, as well as to the government educational system which was geared to learning by rote and reproducing the memorised material in the examinations. Although KMV had resisted government funding, it was not able to resist the pressure for uniformity that the government exercised through its control over employment and educational institutions. The turning point in KMV's development coincided with the death of Lala Devraj in 1935.

THE TRAP—ENUCIHTLNI) MOTHERS

The syllabus and content of KMV education had originated in the Arya Samaj reaction, against both certain aspects of Hindu orthodoxy and the ideological and cultural onslaught of the Christian missions. The Samajists took pride in keeping their education free from corrupting "Western" influences. In the context of the colonial economy, this meant free from employment orientation.

Though women's education became the central issue of the Arya Samaj women's reform movement, it was envisaged only as a means to an end. The institution had to be moulded to suit the specific purpose of women's education: "The aim of all education besides booklearning, is to build up character and efficiency. The latter includes the fitness of an individual to take an honourable place amongst his or her fellow beings. This is particularly so in the case of girls who have to adapt themselves to the environments into which their marriages carry them. She is a householder first and everything else afterwards. She must not only live but also believe and think like her husband before she can be happy. She must realise the future of her children and must sympathise with the system of education which is to bring them up as bread earners in the modern world. How can the future mothers be trained in an atmosphere of contempt for everything modern?"¹⁴⁹ This was the justification offered as late 1935-36 when KMV decided to introduce university examinations for the women studying in the institution.

In their views on the role of women and the purpose of women's education, there was a broad consensus between the three sections—KMV, Gurukul and DAV wings. The views of Lala Hansraj (DAV) could easily have been put forward by spokesmen of the other two wings. Saying that the natural differences between men and women demanded different schemes of education, he went on: "Women exist to make a heaven of this earth, and if the education they receive does not help them to make a heaven of their homes, it stands self-condemned. Unfortunately, we have not to face the same difficulties here as confront us in the case of boys. We can try independent experiments here and evolve our own universities."¹⁵⁰

The "difficulties" faced in the case of boys

that he refers to lay in the contradiction between the desire to impart traditional Vedic education and the unavoidable necessity to prepare boys for government examinations and government employment. No such difficulty presented itself in the case of girls. While, on the one hand, this left the field open for creative experiment and an education more in tune with the environment and the needs of the students, it was also a serious obstacle to equipping girls for employment. It cut them off from whatever meagre opportunity might have existed to penetrate the citadel of clerical employment, and further isolated them in the separate female space, with their own language, own concerns and own ideology. In fact, it tended to confine them within the Utopian vision of a Vedic past forever vanished, while their menfolk were making adjustments to the realities of colonial life.

Even the teachers' training course at KMV was seen not so much as a way of opening employment opportunities to women. Teaching was seen more as a mission than a job. This partly explains the continuing shortage of female teachers documented in Education Department Reports as late as the second decade of the twentieth century.

KMV education soon became an added qualification in the urban middle class marriage market. The issues of *Saddharma Pracharak* carried regular advertisements listing, among other desired characteristics, KMV education as a qualification for the young brides offered and sought in marriage.

WOMEN'S SELF-VIEW

The writings by women in various Arya Samaj magazines show the internalisation by them of the model imposed upon them. The self-view of women which emerges is a carefully tailored one, and though it represents an advance over the earlier situation, wherein this class of women were kept in veiled ignorance and servitude, it by no means signifies a radical departure.

The prose tracts written by the women of the Stri Samaj, which addressed themselves directly to the social oppression of women and called for their uplift, are more in the nature of appeals to men to give them a chance to become enlightened life partners than demands for women's rights. "Pativrata Dharma", a pamphlet by a young woman, tells the reader that the depressed condition of women is the "fruit of their *adhharma*" because women have forsaken *Patidharma* (duty towards husband). Even when she advocates education for women, an "eminent woman educationist" insists that what is needed is a "womanly education for women." Another woman, writing in *Saddharma Pracharak*, assures her readers that when women ask for education, it is not because they want to go astray and take up jobs. Woman is the *ardhangini* (complementary half) of man and therefore should not

be left completely ignorant. It is in the interest of men not to neglect their "other halves" otherwise their children, in whose education mothers have a crucial role, will suffer.¹⁵¹

Panchal Pandita and *Julvid Sakha*, the two organs of KMV, offer additional examples of women's access to media of expression during the period. *Panchal Pandita* professed, on its title page, to be "solely devoted to the interests of Indian women" yet women found in it a very inadequate voice. To take a random sample, in the November 1909 issue, there are 11 pieces ranging from short stories to KMV news items to information on women's employment in Japan. Out of these, only two are written by women. In the December 1912 issue, only one out of 10 pieces is written by a woman. This trend continues into the 1930s in the *Julvid Sakha*. Most of the pieces written by women turn out to be class assignments and essays written by the students of KMV. Hence, they tend to be on well-worn themes like the duties of good students or descriptions of excursions and functions. There are interesting reports of fund raising tours such as Narayani Devi's account of her visit to Africa, serialised in *Julvid Sakha* of 1933. But the serious and consistent effort behind the magazines, the policy guiding them, was not in the hands of women.

In handling women's issues, KMV and the Samaj left certain crucial issues untouched. In the various discussions of the husband-wife relationship, the emphasis is on "love", "tolerance", "faithfulness"—the wife being expected to embody these virtues and win her husband's heart with her charms and accomplishments. But the questions of control over income, decision making and the possibility of conflict are never raised. The underlying implication is that though the couple should discuss household affairs together, the wife should, in the final analysis, gracefully give way to her husband.

The question of the woman having a say as to whether or not she will marry and whom she will marry, is tentatively raised through stories. Marriages by choice are, however, seldom allowed to take place in defiance of the parents' wishes, the ideological stand on the question of choice is made pitifully clear in the *Julvid Sakha* of November 1932: "Mrs Sushila Devi, by the grace of God has done well in both the Vidyalaya tenth class exam and the Punjab University Matriculation exam. She was married this July. Though she was very anxious and eager to study further, she had to bow before the wish of her *pujya* [worthy to be worshipped] parents."¹⁵²

The inevitable logic of the ambiguity inherent from the start in Samaj thinking was that the early fervour for women's education, which, as we have seen, had met with opposition, gave way to a conventional acceptance. Education was not a radical departure but rather a desirable asset for a

bride. During the same period, the KMV organ, from being a popularly read magazine with a wide circulation amongst pro-reform groups, came gradually to resemble any other college magazine. Today known as *Divya*, it contains small pieces written by the girls and reports on college events. It does not even glance beyond the Vidyalaya walls. The domesticating features of the earlier *Panchal Pandita* and *Julvid Sakha* are, however, preserved—receipts for butter-scotch carry on the trend set by embroidery patterns and advertisements for face cream in the earlier magazines. *Divya* is indeed a far cry from *Panchal Pandita* with its sweep of vision that took in the suffragette movement and the South East Asian political situation. This change is a mirror of the change which came over the institution and the movement as a whole, not so much a regressive change as a stultification implicit in the character of the movement from the very beginning.

BACKWARD MOVING MOVEMENT THE PRESENT TIME

Even in the first flush of enthusiasm, the reformers constantly assured themselves and others that they would only "cleanse" the worst excesses generated within the social structure, and not touch the structure itself. Hence the tendency to withdraw from the questions they raised, and beat a hasty and alarmed retreat when the movement seemed to be moving out of narrow confines. Colleges and schools like KMV seem to be creating newer forms of institutionalisation of women's unfreedom.¹⁵³

For instance, Kanya Ashram, the girls' hostel at KMV, opened by Lala Devraj, was originally meant as an institution which would allow girls to step out of societal constraints and would provide them with a freer atmosphere for learning and self development. The same Kanya Ashram today is a virtual prison. The rules and regulations restricting freedom of movement remain almost unchanged since the 1920s. Girls cannot step out of the gate without the written permission of their parents, even if the parents happen to be in a foreign country. When they do step out, they must be accompanied by the approved local guardian.

The prospectus for 1978-79 states: "All the letters, packages, telegrams to students must pass through the hands of the Principal and may be opened by her at her discretion or by any other person authorised by her. Parents and guardians are advised not to send any registered letters or parcels to the students." Only those visitors are permitted to see the girls whose photographs have been submitted to the warden by the parents as "approved visitors". The few facilities available to the students are kept locked. The television set is switched on only when the warden pleases, and may be switched off whenever she chooses, even in the middle of a programme. The girls are locked into the

hostel compound after college hours and are not even allowed into the college garden. Disciplinary action has been taken against students for visiting each others' rooms after the bell rings at 9 pm for solitary study."

The repression and resulting morbidity inside the four walls of this "educational" institution are such that an arranged marriage and an oppressive joint family set-up seem like blissful escape to most of the girls.

Swami Dayanand, the founder of the Arya Samaj, took for granted that "nature" had determined different roles for men and women in society. The social position of men and women was not seen as a social creation. Later, Arya Samajists used this notion as a major ideological weapon to halt women's freedom at whatever point they found convenient.

However, women's status was altered within the family and the Arya Samaj helped combat urban middle class prejudices against women's education. While it did not address itself to some of the fundamental issues concerning women's freedom, it created certain preconditions for alleviation of some of the more crippling aspects of their oppression.

Most of the issues taken up by the Samaj related to a reorganisation of family structure among the urban middle classes and removal of some of the more glaring abuses. Despite the initial enthusiasm in breaking down several traditional barriers, the movement hinged on the theme that women's main sphere of activity is the home because of a "natural" division of labour. They sought with a new vigour to convince women that "Pati Sewa [service of husband] is a woman's *Dharma*, not her slavery".

In fact, in some ways, it can be said that the Arya Samaj movement was intended to "reform" women rather than to reform the social conditions which oppressed them. Women were to be educated into becoming more suitable wives and mothers to Western-educated men. Even so, before independence, KMV's contact with the freedom struggle kept alive some of the earlier urges. After independence, KMV has rapidly deteriorated into an institution maintaining a very repressive status quoist culture and has become like any other provincial college.

Notes

[All the translations from Hindi to English are my own.]

- 1 G W Leitner, "History of Indigenous Education in the Punjab since Annexation", Calcutta, 1882, p 98 and p 104.
- 2 "Appendix to the Education Commission Report", Report by the Punjab Provincial Committee and Memorials addressed to the Education Commission, Calcutta, 1884, p 10. For a detailed discussion of this and related issues, see my paper, "The Daughters of Arya Varta: Arya Samaj Efforts for Women's Education and Social Reform in Punjab", *Indian Economic and*

- Social History Review*, March-April 1986.
- 3 The Daughters of Arya Varta', *ibid.*
- 4 "Census of India", Punjab 1901, para 40, chapter IV, p 219,
- 5 "Census of India" Punjab 1881, para 749, chapter VIII, p 389, and "Appendix to Education Commission Report", *op cit* Evidence of the Rev F H Baring, p 159.
- 6 "Punjab Native Newspaper Reports" Vol IX, No 37, p 519; *ibid* p 513; Vol IX, No 46, p 675; Vol IX, No 51, p 723; Vol X, No 4, p 56.
- 7 For a detailed discussion, see The Daughters of Arya Varta,' *op cit.*
- 8 "Kala Devraj", Satyadev Vidyalankar, Kanya Mahavidyalaya Prabandh Krita Sabha, Jalandhar City, 3rd edition, (1st edition 1937) pp 111-12.
- 9 *Arya Patrika*, September 12, 1885, p 4 and October 3, 1885, p 4.
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- 11 *Ibid*, p 112.
- 12 *Ibid*, p 113.
- 13 *Ibid*, pp 115-116.
- 14 *Tribune*, March 24, 1894, Letter to the Editor by Sundar Das Suri, pp 4-5.
- 15 *Tribune*, March 28, 1894, Letter to the Editor by L C, p 5.
- 16 *Tribune*, April 14, 1894, Letter to the Editor by Bulaki Ram, p 5.
- 17 *Tribune*, May 26, 1894, Letter to the Editor by Shivdayal, p 5.
- 18 *Tribune*, April 11, 1894, Letter to the Editor by Sundar Das Suri, p 5.
- 19 *Tribune*, May 9, 1894, Letter to the Editor by Lala Markishen Lal, p 5.
- 20 *Tribune*, April 7, 1894, Letter to the Editor by Lala Harkishen Lal, p 4.
- 21 *Tribune*, April 21, 1894, Letter to the Editor by Shconarain, citing Herbert Spencer, p 5.
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- 23 Lala Devraj, *op cit*, pp 58-59.
- 24 *Ibid*, pp 105-106.
- 25 Lala Devraj, *op cit*, p 198.
- 26 From the advertisement for *Panchal Pandita*, on the inside cover of every issue of the magazine. The same advertisement also used often to appear in the *Tribune* during this time.
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- 28 *Ibid*, June 1900, p 22.
- 29 "*Balodyan Sangeet*", Lala Devraj, Stree Shiksha Sahitya Bhandar Gramhavali, Kanya Mahavidyalaya, 7th edition, Samvat Vikrami, 1975.
- 30 "*Doosri Pathavair*", Lala Devraj, Merchant Press, Kanpur, 7th edition, Samvat Vikrami, 1983,
- 31 "*pathshala Ki Kanya*." Lala Devraj, Kanya Mahavidyalaya Gramhavali, 5th edition, 1911 A D, Jalandhar.
- 32 "*Stree Dharma Niti*." Lala Devraj, Kanya Mahavidyalaya Granthavali.
- 33 "*Patra Kaumudi*." Lala Devraj, Kanya Mahavidyalaya Granthavali, 4th edition, 1913 A D.
- 34 "*Kanya Mahavidyalaya ka Vivran Patra*," Jalandhar, 1930.
- 35 *Ibid*.
- 36 "*Kanya Mahavidyalaya ka Vivran Patra*" 1918.

- 37 *The Indian Social Reformer*, October 29, 1899, Vol X, No 9, pp 65-66.
- 38 *Tribune*, February 6, 1895, p 4.
- 39 "Kanya Mahavidyalaya ka Vivran Patra" Vikrami Samvat 1986. See also KMV prospectus for 1929-30.
- 40 'Veer Devi Suvrita', Kumari Santoshwati, *Jalvid Sakha*, March 1933, pp 3-8.
- 41 See for example 'Jeewan Charitra, Mary Somerville', *Panchal Pandita*, March 1910, pp 13-17.
- 42 'Jeewan Charitra, Elizabeth Fry', *Panchal Pandita*, June 1910, pp 11-15.
- 43 Ibid, p 11
- 44 'Suvira', *Panchal Pandita*, op cit, February 1903, p 22.
- 45 'Bahan Bahan ka Prem', Vishnudutt, *Panchal Pandita* December 1909, pp 9-11.
- 46 *Tribune*, March 2, 1895, p 5.
- 47 "Lala Devraj", op cit, p 155.
- 48 'Shukra ka uday aur ast', *Panchal Pandita*, February 1906, pp 11-12.
- 49 'Bhut Chudail' *Panchai Pandita*, February 1902, pp 22-23, also October 1906, p 6.
- 50 'Mrit Vilap', *Panchai Pandita*, June 1900, pp 4-5. See also June 1901, pp 5-6.
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- 52 "Lala Devraj", op cit, p 168.
- 53 'Gayan', *Panchal Pandita*, op cit, June 1903, pp 9 10. See also January 1902, pp 8-9 and March 1910, pp 19-21.
- 54 *Panchai Pandita*, June 1903, pp 9-10.
- 55 'Gayan Vidya', *Panchai Pandita*, May 1902, p 5. See also December 1901, pp 3-4.
- 56 'Vividhvarta', *Panchal Pandita*, September 1903, p 16.
- 57 See, for example, 'Stree Jagat', *Panchal Pandita*, December 1905, p 5.
- 58 'Kanya Mahavidyalaya Samachar', *Panchal Pandita*, op cit, September 1903, pp 5-6.
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- 60 "Pandit Lekh Ram", Kuliya Arya Musafir, Arya Pratinidhi Sabha, Jalandhar.
- 61 "Lala Devraj", op cit, p 151.
- 62 "Stree Shiksha ke upaye", Pandit Lekh Ram, Lahore, 1892.
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- 66 *Saddharma Pracharak*, May 1907 See also *Panchai Pandita*, March 1907, and several issues through 1907.
- 67 Preface to "Semiramis", Lala Devraj, Kanya Mahavidyalaya, Grant hmala, Jalandhar, 1906.
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- 95 Lala Devraj, op cit, p 153.
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- 97 Ibid, p 154.
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- 103 Ibid, pp 108 104.
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- 153 My observations on KMV in this section are based on interviews with students in 1978.