

Final Report of Minor Research Project

**A Review of the Coverage Published in Stree Magazine of Social
reform Movement of Women 1930-1947**

**Submitted by
Shruti Bhatkhande
Head, Department of History,
P.E. Society's Modern College of Arts, Science
& Commerce,
Ganeshkhind, Pune-411016**

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Mrs. Shruti Bhatkhande
Head, Department of History
Modern College of Arts, Science & Commerce
Ganeshkhind, Pune-16

A review of the articles published in Stree magazine regarding social reform movements of women during the period 1930-1947

The 19th century is an important phase in the history of India. This century was the beginning of social reforms, nationalism, movement for independence and modernization in India. It can be called as an enlightenment era of India. This enlightenment was a thread joining the middle age and the modern age. During that time many articles published in the newspapers and magazine were about social reforms, as many people felt the need to educate people, particularly women on many issues that were bothering the educated people in the society. From this viewpoint it is important to find out what type of articles were published in the magazines as well as newspapers during this period.

This is the study the articles published in the magazines, particularly Stree magazine during the period from the year 1930 to 1947.

Situation of women in Maharashtra:

In the 19th century the situation of women in Maharashtra was very bad. They did not have any kind of independence. Her position in the family was secondary. On this background Mahatma Jyotiba Phule's work in women's education was the first step towards modernization in Maharashtra. He thought and acted to bring about equality among men and women. He began the movement for women's education and started this by educating his own wife. Bharatratna Maharshi Dhondo Keshav Karve was also a great social reformer and pioneer of women's education. In the period, in which he started the work of women's education, that was the period of fight for independence and social reforms. But even in that period he continued his work of women's education, because he firmly believed that education is the only way to make women independent and change their status in the society. The work of many social reformers like Phule, Karve, Bal Shastri Jambhekar, Gopal Hari Deshmukh etc. has brought about a change in the life of women. The articles written by likeminded people also helped in this process.

Newspapers and magazines helped in bring about awareness in the society. Educated people in the society decided to bring social reforms, but not by blindly following the western thoughts.

They wanted to make reforms which were proper and agreeable for Indian society. Newly educated Indians started a modernization movement in India. The confluence of good principles from Indian culture and western thoughts was the thing people of India needed at that time. In order to bring the society on the path of modernization they adopted many means. Western education, institutions bringing about social and religious reforms in the society, newspapers and magazines etc. were some of the means they used to achieve their goal. The most important means of contacting people were newspapers and magazines. Their contribution in bringing about awakening among the people is unprecedented.

The first magazine in Marathi was started by Balshastri Jambhekar in the year 1848. In this periodical writers mainly wrote about the upliftment of women and the problems related to them. In the period from 1848 to 1850 Lokahitwadi (Gopal Hari Deshmukh) wrote about women's life, atrocities on widows, child marriages, child widowhood, re-marriages of women and tried to awaken people against these problems. In some periodicals like Dnyanprasarak (1850), Sumitra (1855), Subodh patrika (1873) and "Dnyadodaya" by American Mission, many articles, stories, poems and novels were written concerning women's life in those days.

After the spread and canvassing of women's education many new periodicals like Stree Bhushan (1864), Abalamitra (1876), Stree Shikshan Chandrika (1899) were started. Novels, articles, dialogues, question-answers, essays and short dramas etc. were written related to women's problems. The purpose behind it was:

1. An entertainment through education
2. Enlightenment of women
3. To give new inspiration
4. To spread education
5. Ingraining new thoughts by changing women's mentality
6. Make them health conscious

Along with this some articles were also written on subjects like advice on legal matters, cooking, kitchen, child rearing and child development, married life, sewing, embroidery, needlework, to

dressing-up, traditions, beauty tips, women's agitation, working women and their problems, divorce, unmarried women etc.

In the 19th century a new era was started in the life of Indian women. Due to women's education their individuality changed and also the attitude of the society towards them. Woman's self-esteem and confidence increased. They also started writing independently about their own problems. Along with historical and mythological biographies of women many stories and novels were written about new awareness. During the period 1900 to 1920 women's sensitivity increased and they started looking at the traditions and customs in a new perspective and the injustice against them was discussed and tried to be rectified. The pace of their life increased and they started taking part in the social and political activities. Woman's world became more mature.

The magazines like Gruhalakshmi (1927), Navi Gruhalakshmi (1934), Stree (1930), Bhagani (1941), Mahila (1933), Vanitavishwa (1948) of new awareness were started. In the 20th century literature the reflection of new sentiments could be seen. During this period the number of literary magazines was sixty two. Magazines related to women's issues were like Maitrin, Mahila, Grihlakshmi, Manorama, Bhagini etc.

Since 1927 in "Kirkoskar" magazine an article called "Khabar" used to be published about women and their problems.

Mrs. Gangubai Jambhekar used to write this article. In the year 1930 Shantanurao Kirloskar felt the need for a separate magazine for women. Mr. Edward Bock, an editor of the magazine "Ladies home journal" from America was a friend of Mr. Shantanurao Kirloskar. He said that "women's world is separate and independent. If a magazine could be started in Marathi for depicting their thoughts and issues they face in their day to day life, it could be successful and it will also serve the purpose of doing social reforms in the society". Mr. Shantanurao Kirloskar liked this idea and he decided to start a separate magazine for women and he named it "Stree" (2). He invited some men and women writers to Kirloskarwadi to discuss this issue and after the discussion the birth of "Stree" magazine took place (1930).

Shantanurao has explained his ideas about starting a separate magazine for women in his Autobiography "Shanvakiya". He says, "Make the world a bit better, because you are in it." He

put this ideal in front of him. While talking about the purposes of starting a separate magazine for women, he has mentions in his autobiography that women's world is different than that of men. Therefore it is essential to have a separate magazine for them, so that they can express themselves freely, as well as understand their hidden strengths, and come to know about the modern thoughts and awaken themselves with the help of these thoughts as well as entertain themselves while reading novels, stories and other thoughtful articles on various subjects.

After review of 200 issues of "Stree" magazine during the years 1930 to 1947 (pre-independence period) them it was found that the following subjects were mainly dealt with: As this was the pre-independence period, it was more sensitive and awakening and absorbing modern thoughts and to associate them with old traditions and rituals was rather difficult. Most of the articles were related to woman's life. She is in the limelight in most of the stories, novels, articles, and poems. In some of the articles subjects like advice on legal matters, cooking, kitchen, child rearing and child development, married life, sewing, embroidery, needlework, dressing-up, traditions, beauty tips, women's agitation, working women and their problems, divorce, unmarried women etc. were dealt with more thoroughly. One can find history of women's social and religious movement in these issues. In 6 years this magazine has reached in almost all the homes in Maharashtra and it enjoyed a readership of more than 5 lakh readers.

In the beginning only the household issues were dealt with. But as women became more aware of the social problems, they started writing about it as well. The people who started this magazine were of the opinion that one should not treat women as a weaker section of the society. Once they are given the education they will be independent and their horizon will widen, they will be able to face any situation. They should be given the opportunity to become independent of the family and work outside of the house, earn money and enjoy the fruits of their labor.

This magazine gave an opportunity to women to express themselves. Many of them became renowned writers, social workers and took up high posts in educational and other fields. For example:

1. Ganagubai Kulkarni wrote through political angle on the problems that might arise if Fascism wins in the war. (3)

(2) Kirloskar Shankarrao, "Shanwakiya", autobiography, Kirloskar press publishing, Oct. 1974, Pune, Page 149-150

(3) Issue of Stree magazine (Jan. 1942) "Social revolution and women", pages 481-484.

2. Shantabai Bhaleroa was a social worker. An article was written about her. Like Bharat Sevak Samaj she had started an institution called "Women's fellowship of service".

3. An interview of Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya is there under the heading "Women's movements".

4. Under the presidentship of Sulochanabai Dongare All India dalit women symposium had taken place. A report of that is also found in the magazine.

5. Shantaben Mehta became the Vice Chancellor of women's university and Irawati Karve, a writer and researcher, became a professor in the Fergusson College, Pune.

6. Another objective was to publish women's literature through this magazine. (4)

200th issue of Stree magazine was published in February 1947. At that time Mr. Morarji Desai was the Home minister. He spoke very highly about this magazine. He said, "Stree magazine has created a formative ideal in front of the people. In order to make women's life happy and enriched, many useful discussions, articles and interviews were written in this magazine. It has contributed in the overall development of women. I wish that this magazine keeps on doing this good work and will be successful in its endeavor."

Stree magazine tried to depict the emotional world of women at that time. All the problems related to women were put forth through the writings in this magazine. Women's secondary status should be abolished, they should be given an opportunity to uplift themselves was the objective behind it. It must be stated emphatically that this magazine has succeeded in achieving that objective.

The name "Stree" (woman) of the magazine itself created curiosity among women regarding this magazine. Many women started writing in this magazine, as they identified themselves with it. It gave them a platform to express themselves. A credit of creating renowned women writers should be given to this magazine. Many capable women were introduced through the magazine,

which gave other women inspiration to write and express themselves. Different work opportunities and avenues were opened for them. They became aware of their hidden strength and understood the importance of economic independence. Women understood the problems of other women and the feeling of togetherness, friendship grew among them.

Through the emergence of “Stree” magazine many milestones were created in the life of women. Through this magazine she got an open platform to write about her aspirations, her problems as well as her inner thoughts. Due to this magazine women started writing on many issues in the society. Not only that they also started writing poems, short-stories and novels. She also became socially conscious and politically aware about her rights. She started doing social work for the upliftment of women in the society. Thus a credit of creating many good women writers, social workers and political leaders should be given to this magazine.

Mrs. Shruti Bhatkhande, Head of the Department of History

Modern college of Arts, Science and commerce

Ganeshkhind, Pune-411016

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