

City University of New York (CUNY)

CUNY Academic Works

Dissertations and Theses

City College of New York

2016

The Evolution of Feminism in India through Women Writers of the Colonial Period: Krupabai Sathianadhan, Cornelia Sorabji, and Sarojini Naidu

Betsy George
CUNY City College

[How does access to this work benefit you? Let us know!](#)

More information about this work at: https://academicworks.cuny.edu/cc_etds_theses/578

Discover additional works at: <https://academicworks.cuny.edu>

This work is made publicly available by the City University of New York (CUNY).
Contact: AcademicWorks@cuny.edu

The Evolution of Feminism in India through Women

Writers of the Colonial Period:

Krupabai Sathianadhan, Cornelia Sorabji, and

Sarojini Naidu

By:

Betsy George

betsygeorge99@gmail.com

05/09/16

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

of the City College of the City University of New York

Mentor: Professor Robert Higney

Second Reader: Professor Laura Hinton

Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Krupabai Satthiandhan	8
Cornelia Sorabji	11
Sarojini Naidu	13
Preview of Chapters ..	15
Chapter One: Krupabai Satthianadhan — “The Theorist”	17
The Constraints of Hinduism: “The Orthodox Hindu Wife”	19
Christianity “The New Age of the New Woman”	30
Chapter Two: Cornelia Sorabji — “The Crusader”	37
“The Pestilence of Noonday”	42
“A Living Sacrifice”	43
“Greater Love”	46
“Behind the Purdah”	51
Chapter Three: Sarojini Naidu — “The Nationalist”	56
“The Pardah Nashin”	57
“Caprice”	61
“Dirge”	63
“Indian Gypsy”	67
Chapter Four: The Three Pillars of the Evolution of Feminism	72
Bibliography	76

The Evolution of Feminism in India through Women Writers of the Colonial Period:

Sarojini Naidu, Krupabai Satthianadhan, and Cornelia Sorabji

Introduction

During the British Raj, the socioeconomic status of women in India began to transform as industrialization and urbanization took place allowing for areas of education, politics, and employment to become accessible to women. In this new revolution of educated women were three leading figures that advocated the female voice, Krupabai Satthianadhan, Cornelia Sorabji, and Sarojini Naidu. One may say that it was in this colonial period that feminism in India was formed. Although the term feminism did not arise at the time of the colonial period, it is being associated with three women here because of their actions for women's equality in India. It was in the period of the nineteenth and twentieth century India that social movements took place in regards to the inequalities between men and women. The feminist voice has been heard and was the subject of change. Although there was great protest against the British Empire and its oppression on the native people of India, there was also much oppression made by the native people on the women of India through its centuries old social practices. Social movements were prompted by individuals such as Satthianadhan, Sorabji, and Naidu who used their platform as writers to advocate the hidden voice of the traditional Indian women.

These women projected their beliefs through their writings and actions. All three women were born into the British Raj, and educated through English schooling. Being the first generation of Indian writers who have written texts in the English language, they promoted their beliefs about the social injustice women of India faced in their daily lives, and integrated them into their writings. Looking into India's history, many women have been subjected to religious

customs that have degraded their status within society. Sathianadhan, Sorabji, and Naidu, who were all elite women, all benefited from the key component of the shift in the status of women in society, and that was education. The establishment of education during the colonial period was what triggered a societal change in structure.

In *The Oxford History of the British Empire: The Nineteenth Century*, Susan Bayly, in a chapter titled “The Evolution of Colonial Cultures: Nineteenth-Century Asia,” states that “With the expansion of professional and clerical employment, education itself became a major industry. In the subcontinent English education was initially provided by missionaries” (416). In ancient India, education was only given to boys who attended Gurukuls. Gurukuls were small schools in villages, the name deriving from the word “guru” which means teacher. It was early as 1810 that the schooling for girls was established by British missionaries. Soon after, the Ladies Society for Native Female Education was established and the society created numerous schools for girls. In an online database, features the newspaper titled *The Christian Advocate: Volume 4* written in 1826, it features the Ladies Society for Native Female Education under the heading “Religious Intelligence,” stating that “It appears that in less than three years thirty native-female schools have been formed, and between 500 and 600 girls are under instruction in the different schools supported by the Ladies’ Society for Native-female education.” (*The Christian Advocate: Volume 4*, 91) In addition, the source continues to further detail the expansion that the society planned to make in order to provide more girls with education in efforts to create additional schools in neighborhoods. At the end of the nineteenth century, many schools were established and in progress for girls. It was not until 1875 that universities in Madras and Calcutta allowed girls to attend. However this was only for a select amount of girls, mostly coming from royal or Brahmin

families, leading a vast majority of girls to be subjected to the traditional roles of being mothers and wives.

Although education was a predominant factor in the enhancement of the lives of many women, it was the Social Reform Movement that emphasized the importance of women's roles in society. In this movement many aspects of social norms and traditions for women in society were protested against, such as: sati, purdah, child marriage, polygamy, caste discrimination, property rights, female infanticide, devadasi, and other restrictions on women. Such topics were of most importance to Sathianadhan, Sorabji, and Naidu, and were prevalent in their texts. The abolishment of these practices was on the forefront of their agenda. The strains on women in society were seen by Sathianadhan, Sorabji, and Naidu, and they were adamant about creating reforms to outlaw these social practices. New social norms began to replace the traditional norms of women; however, they spread at a gradual pace. Edward Said underlines these very ancient practices that needed reform as he states in *Culture and Imperialism*:

But we must also focus on the intellectual and cultural argument within the nationalist resistance that once independence was gained new and imaginative preconceptions of society and culture were required in order to avoid the old orthodoxies and injustices. The women's movement is central here. For as primary resistance gets under way, to be followed by fully fledged nationalist parties, unfair male practices like concubinage, polygamy, foot-binding, sati, and visual enslavement become the focal points of women's resistance. (*Culture and Imperialism* 218)

Sati was an ancient tradition for many Hindu women widows. This was a practice in which the widow would throw herself or be thrown into her husband's pyre and burn to death. Purdah was

the name of a practice within Muslim and Hindu religions, where women would be confined to their homes unable to make contact with any men and also covered their faces and bodies. Such traditions of the purdah exists today but was seen as a restriction against women and was pursued to be abolished. India's history has had a long tradition of child marriages, a custom within many of its societies. It was directed for young girls to be married, which most of the time were to much older men. Previously and even today in many parts of India, young girls would be married off, have children, and spend the rest of their lives attending to the needs of their children and husband. The dangers of such child bearing at a young age has taken the lives of thousands of girls. The complications of teenage pregnancy not only created death tolls of young brides, but also subjected them and their babies to many health problems.

In addition, these marriages were arranged and included a sum of money given to the groom from the brides family called a dowry. A notion that suggests the payment of ones life given to another, in this case a bride to a groom. These social norms have tarnished the worth of women in society, making the topic of marriage a deal. These young girls would spend the rest of their lives serving their husbands and bearing children. Women were not allowed to speak unless they were spoken too and never able to look into the eyes of their husbands. In many marriages women addressed their husbands as their masters. In society this was all the worth a women had. It was not until 1929 that the notion of child marriage was banned. In relation to women in marriage, polygamy was a common social norm amongst men. A man could have sexual relations with numerous women, but a women's virginity was of utmost importance when it came to marriage.

Girls were married at a young age in order to protect their virginity. A girl who was no longer a virgin became an outcast in society. Furthermore, Hindu women who became widows were not allowed to remarry and had to have their heads shaved as a practice called tonsure. It was not until the Hindu Women Remarriage Act was passed in 1856 that women were set free from this custom. Women faced many tribulations if their husbands died, including giving up their property because females were not allowed to have such power. They would have to give the property to the government forcing themselves to become homeless. Property of their own families were only given to the son, and never to the daughter. The son was the caretaker of his parents, and the daughter became the caretaker of her in-laws, husband, and children. It was in 1937 that the Hindu Women's Rights to Properties Act was declared, allowing women to obtain and keep their property.

In an article titled "Mother India: Empire, Nation, and the Female Voice" by Mrinalini Sinha, she compiles the impending issues India faced in the twenty century:

Women's emancipation and national liberation, especially under M. K. Gandhi's leadership of the nationalist movement from the 1920s onwards, became part of the same struggle; the identification of women's struggles with the national struggle was summed up in the popular slogan, "India cannot be free until its women are free and women cannot be free until India is free." ("The Female Voice and the Discourse of Imperialism" 16)

This was the underlining factor to many of Sathianadhan, Sorabji, and Naidu's beliefs. Without freedom for women of India, the country would never be free. Women for centuries in India had faced an appalling list of restrictions because of their sex, and it was the social reform during the

eighteenth and nineteenth century that created a shift in such social norms. It was such social movements by social reformists that made way for the women to speak out about the issues they faced. The restrictions against women created inequality between men and women.

Satthianadhan, Sorabji, and Naidu observed such practices against women and emphasized the swift action to change them. Each of these women have written texts on this subject or have used their role in society as a women to protest against such diminishing inequality. These texts written to convey their social reformist beliefs range in many forms: Satthianadhan wrote novels, Sorabji wrote narratives, and Naidu wrote poetry. These women who have overcome the battles that were predestined for them, helped support a society with new and transformed social norms while outlawing those that persecuted many women before them. Being brought up in a culture with such traditions impacted the lives of Satthianadhan, Sorabji, and Naidu, and this manifested itself in acts of protest.

Krupabai Satthianadhan

Krupabai Satthianadhan was a pioneer in women rights and studies, and considered as one of the earliest feminist theorist. The following section on the biography of Krupabai Satthianadhan relies heavily on the account of Chandani Lokuge in the introduction of *Kamala, The Story of a Hindu-Child Wife*, as she is the editor of the newly published text, as well as Arvind Krishna Mehrotra in, *A History of Indian Literature in English*. Satthianadhan was born in 1862 in Ahmednagar, later settling in Madras, and was born into a Brahmin family who had converted into Christianity. Satthianadhan's father died while she was a child, and she turned to her

older brother Bhaskar as a father figure. Bhaskar was a immense influence on the life of Saththianadhan, as he shared with her the realm of education. He too died, and it was just Saththianadhan and her mother. Her mother being of Hindu origin, but a Christian convert, still held tight to her Hindu practices leaving Saththianadhan to understand both worlds of religion. This seems to be her inspiration for her two texts, *Kamala, the Story of a Hindu Child-wife*, and *Saguna, A Story of Native Christian Life*. After the devastating death of her brother, Saththianadhan was taught by European missionaries and studied in the English school system. She was indeed a brilliant child and was far too advanced amongst the other girls. However, under the guidance of an English women doctor she was mentored to learn medicine. She pursued medicine under the influence of her fathers missionary ideals to help others, but especially, for Saththiananthan, to help women in purdahs.

After falling ill, she dropped out again and reapplied to the Madras Medical College where she lived at the house of Reverend W.T. Saththianadhan, who was an eminent Christian missionary. It is there that she met the Reverend's son, Samuel Saththianadhan, and the two got married. While at Madras College she began publishing numerous articles. With her husband's influence, a man who had studied in England at Cambridge University, Saththianadhan submerged herself into novel writing. After he husband received a post as headmaster at the Brecks Memorial School in Octacamund, Saththianadhan opened a school for Muslim girls. She taught at schools for girls, but her health worsen over the months. She returned back to Madras and began writing her novel, *Saguna*. After her first child died, she had a major set back as she suffered from depression. She was later diagnosed with tuberculosis. Although death was soon approaching her, she decided to write one more novel and that was *Kamala*. Her texts shared the

stories of young Indian women who suffered from the social, cultural burdens of the time, with her feminist views portrayed through her female protagonists. She often referred to the word the “New Woman” a symbolic representation of the reforms that were taking place during the start of the nineteenth century. Saththianadhan saw that the western ideals of open-mindedness, progressive thinking, and education was a concept that Christianity adopted seen in the story of *Saguna*. As for *Kamala* the tale of a Hindu women, it presented the traditional indian women that was subjected to customs of the religion. Her two texts are often seen as *Kamala* “the darkness” and *Saguna* “the light.” Saththianadhan delves deeply into the roots of these stories to symbolize the very notions that projected itself in her life. Furthermore, “Female Education” in her text *Miscellaneous Writings*, has brought much attention to the world at that time and even today, and was also published in 1885 in the *Journal of the National Indian Association in Aid of the Social Progress and Education in India*. In these essays she voiced her convictions on the inequality of women, the prevalence of education, and the many social practices that caused women suffrage. In the text *The Emergence of Feminism in Indian, 1850-1920* by Padma Anagol, she recalls Saththianadhan’s feminist views:

Krupabai began her analysis with the general proposition that the independence of a women was a anathema to a Hindu male, who could not bear the idea of a clever wife. Because of the high status that a man commanded in Hindu society, the minute a male child was born he was treated like a king. Because of this, he grew up to be a ‘petter, spoiled despot, or a selfish ease-loving lord’. To his inflated, self-satisfied nature’ the very idea of an intellectual wife in any way superior to him ‘will be gall-wormwood’. If

his wife possessed qualities that he lacked, he would not tolerate it. (*The Emergence of Feminism in India* 32)

In this passage by Anagol, she uses the very words of Sathianadhan to emphasize the passion Sathianadhan had and the rhetoric behind views on women suffrage. In her essays, she continues to spread her feminist theories as a way to underline the appalling reasons behind the oppression of women. She uses the psyche of men to bring to light of their insecurities. Sathianathan has become one of the most influential names in the evolution of feminism in India.

Cornelia Sorabji

A second Indian woman that has also bestowed upon the growth of feminism in India was Cornelia Sorabji. She advocated for the livelihood of Indian women, and has attributed to the betterment of hundreds of women during the colonial period, along with being India's first woman lawyer. The following biography on Cornelia Sorabji has been influenced by the accounts of Suparna Gooptu in *Cornelia Sorabji: India's Pioneer Woman Lawyer*. Sorabji was born on November 1, 1866 in Nasik, India. Born into the colonial period, her name was a blend of Indian and British culture. Her father Reverend Sorabji Karsedji was a Parsee convert to Anglican Christianity, and her mother Francine Ford was a Parsee who was adopted by a British family. Sorabji was raised in the lifestyle of the English, but it was essential to her parents that she held to her Indian culture. She was educated in Ponna and was able to learn many of the native languages. In 1888, she achieved her first degree from Bombay University. Sorabji was a very intelligent student and was given a Government of India scholarship to study abroad at Oxford University to pursue Law. However, that scholarship was revoked because she was a

female. The idea that a woman could be a possible candidate did not take notice, and therefore once it was known she was a female she was then rejected. Sorabji's family and friends made donations for her studies and she was then able to go abroad. She was the first woman in Britain or India to enter and read law at Oxford University. She had to overcome challenges of being the only woman in a field of men, with restrictions in entering certain study areas of the university, and she received backlash from many of the male students. She was the first woman, British or Indian, to sit for the bar exam but was not allowed a degree. She had to receive special permission by the Congressional Decree to take the Bachelor of Civil Laws exam. She was also a member of the Lincoln's Inn in 1922. With her persistence and intellect, she was the first woman lawyer in India and Britain.

Sorabji returned back to India after her studies, and committed herself to helping women, especially to the cause of Purdahnashins, the term used for the group of women who lived under the Purdah customs. Her mission was to aide these marginalized women who were suffering and needed a voice. Her parents, who instilled in her the necessity of social reforms and progressive thinking, molded Sorabji to help the women of India. The Purdahnashins were women who were banned from interacting with any males on the outside, a segregation of the male and female sex as part of Hindu customs. As a result they were not allowed to testify in court, which were male oriented. These women owned property that they could not legally obtain because of the inability to appear in court to defend it. For some time Sorabji was not able to help these women because of her own restrictions on women practicing law, but in 1924 this was changed and women were allowed to practice. Sorabji worked as the Legal Adviser to the Government's Court of Wards. It

was with this job title that she helped many widowed women get back their lands that were given directly to the government after their husbands were deceased. Sorabji had helped over six hundred women and children in fighting legal cases. She was a leading lady in feminist views, and was the voice for many traditional Indian women suffering from inequality and segregation between the sexes in issues such as, the abolishment of child-marriages, as well as taking initiative to set better standards of health for young mothers and infants. She founded the Social Service League in Bengal. Her famous text *Love and Life Behind the Purdah*, a collection of narratives, speaks for the women behind these cruel social practices, divulging into the corners of solidarity these women faced from the outside world.

Sarojini Naidu

Lastly of the three is Sarojini Naidu, who was an important person not only for advocating women rights and equality, but also in attaining the nation's freedom from the British.

The following section discussing the background and life of Sarojini Naidu depends largely on the account of Vishwanath S. Paravane in *Sarojini Naidu: An Introduction to Her Life, Work and Poetry*, and also from Arvind Krishna Mehrotra's *A History of Indian Literature in English*.

Naidu was born on February 13, 1879 in Hyderabad, India, to a Bengali Brahmin family. Her father was the principal of the Nizam's College in Hyderabad, and a scientist. Growing up, education was very important in her family and this was instilled in Naidu as a young child. Her father was a political activist, and was among the first members of the Indian National Congress. Naidu, as a young girl, was born into the British Raj and received an English education. She was incredibly intelligent and learned an array of languages. Her interests were

much in the realm of poetry. One of her pieces was seen by the Nazim (a ruler of the princely state of Hyderabad), who was impressed by her abilities. At the age of sixteen, she was given a scholarship funded by the Nizam to travel to England. She attended King's College, and later went onto other colleges of Cambridge University. There she wrote a number of poems, filled with astounding visual depictions of her India presented through her lyrical usage of the English language. She returned home after her studies, and married a man named Muthyala Govindaraju Naidu, who was a doctor. Naidu overcame the obstacle of the social practice of only marrying within your caste, when she married her husband in 1898, thus having an inter-caste marriage. They were married through the Brahma Marriage Act of 1872. This Act was passed so that individuals from different religions can marry one another, a previous notion that was banned. It was in 1905, that she published her first poetical text, *The Golden Threshold*, the first of three volumes. In addition, she wrote *The Bird of Time*, and *The Broken Wing*.

It was also during this time that Naidu submerged herself into the National Movement by joining the Indian freedom struggle. In the midst of fighting for the nation's independence she alongside Mahatma Gandhi. In 1915, along with advocating the freedom of the nation, she traveled around India for women's rights and the social welfare of young mothers and their children. The emancipation of women was essential to Naidu, and went hand-in-hand in her efforts to gain India's freedom. Naidu was often referred to as the "crusader" of women's rights, having founded the Indian Women's Association in 1917. This association was created to enhance the lives of women in India, and to establish newer reforms that addressed the issues of equality and women suffrage. Naidu expressed the need for women's right to vote and travelled to England in 1919 to appeal to the Parliament. Naidu was also a leading figure in the the All

India Women's Conference which was established in 1926. In her writings, she uses language as a key tool to protest against the anguish women faced.

In 1919, Mahatma Gandhi formed the Non-Cooperation Movement as a result of the Rowlatt Act passed by the British, and Naidu was a leading member. Naidu became the first women President of the Indian National Congress Party in 1925. In addition, she also participated in the Civil Disobedience Act. She was also a member of the All-India Home Rule Deputation and part of the Round-Table summit. In 1942, Naidu spent two years in jail as a result of participating in the Quit India Movement along with Mahatma Gandhi. After India received independence from the British in 1947, Naidu became the governor of the Uttar Pradesh. She was the first woman to hold a title as governor in India. She held this position until her death in 1949. Naidu was a leading poet, and political activist who had paved the way for future women in politics as well as the road to independence for India. Naidu's contributions to women's rights have helped formulate the evolution of feminism in India.

Preview of Chapters

In the next chapters, one will be able to understand the extent to which Krupabai Sathianadhan, Cornelia Sorabji, and Sarojini Naidu went in order to enhance the lives of women through social reform for the equality of women in India. It was the very contributions of these women that became the stepping stone in the evolution of feminism in India. The colonial period brought forth western traditions such as progressive thinking, and education which has molded the lives of these women into achieving equal standards for women. The social practices that were conceived thousands of years ago needed change in order to obtain justice for the female

sex. Far too long were the women of India passed down from generation to generation carrying the curse from society for being a women. These next chapters will analyze the works of these three women in regards to the voice of the Indian women and the integration of social injustices within their texts. Sathianadhan used the novel as her form of self-expression, and at the heart of her novels is her own reflection of her experiences. In her second novel she used her own life as the plot of the novel, thus contrasting a life in Hinduism and in Christianity. Sorabji used narratives to share connections between the lives of her characters and with the traditional lives of many Indian women. This was a way to bring awareness and understanding to Sorabji's readers on the importance of reform within such societies. Along to guide Sorabji's texts, she also has written an autobiography that directly reflects on the core themes in her narratives. Through Naidu's poetry she conveys her deep rooted beliefs on women's equality and the necessity for change in the treatment of women confined within society. In addition, textual evidence written by many renowned authors and academic journals will be presented. In correlation to all these works, one will walk away having understood the great timeline of the injustices that faced many women in India, as well the birth of feminism in India as a result of the colonial period and social reformists like Krupabai Sathianadhan, Cornelia Sorabji, and Sarojini Naidu.

Chapter One:

Krupabai Sathianadhan — “The Theorist”

Krupabai Sathianadhan was a leading woman in the evolution of feminism, who, like Naidu and Sorabji, dedicated her life to fight for the rights of women. Sathianadhan in particular used psychology as a way to understand why women have been so degraded in India. Her compelling arguments have been used for decades as the foundation for many modern day writers, and she is considered one of the first feminist theorists from India. Sathianadhan’s main texts are called *Kamala, The Story of a Hindu Child-wife*, and another which is a autobiographical text called *Saguna, A Story of Native Christian Life*. In this thesis, her essay specifically “Female Education” will bring to light the life of many women of India and the importance of reform according to Sathianadhan. Sathianadhan, unlike any other woman of the nineteenth century delves into the male psyche, and formulates theories on the evolution of the traditional Indian wife. Her arguments compose a never before seen side of feminism in India. Although the term feminism was not used at the time, it clearly represents the actions and beliefs of Naidu, Sorabji, and Sathianadhan. Sathianadhan through her texts contrasts the life of a Hindu woman and a Christian woman, sharing the differences between both lives as a result of religion. Although she was born into a Brahmin family who had converted to Christianity, her mother still held onto many Hindu practices after her father died. With such childhood experiences, Sathianadhan understood the two religions, allowing for her to see first hand the many contrasts between the two. Her studies and the experiences of her own life gave her the tools to understand the injustices that took place around her. A woman of great intelligence and a cunning way for argument, Sathianadhan’s tone within her theories is rather riveting as she

undermines the “authority” males are given in India. Unlike many of the orthodox Hindu women who are meek and modest, Saththianadhan is demanding, bold, and outspoken on her beliefs. Saththianadhan has truly carried the “voice” for many of India’s women and preached for each woman to have her own individualism. Saththianadhan states from her essay “Female Education” published in 1885 in the *Journal of the National Indian Association in Aid of the Social Progress and Education in India*: “All feel that, in order to raise India to her true level, it is indispensable to raise her daughters from their degraded condition to their proper position in life” (“Female Education” 109). Saththianadhan’s diction, phrases, and arguments are powerful and direct. As a woman born into the height of national turmoil and restrictions against woman, Saththianadhan proved to be a force to reckon with, and one woman who did not simply listen to what is told of her. She desired the “new woman” in every woman who was reformed, intellectual, ambitious, educated, and courageous.

In the two novels by Saththianadhan, she tells the story of two Indian women, one who is Hindu and one who is Christian. Her own childhood becomes the core of these texts as she shares the contrasting lifestyles of being a part of these two religions. To Saththianadhan, Hinduism represented the past, traditional and degraded Indian woman, where as Christianity represented the new reformed, educated, and progressive woman of India. She often symbolically associated Hinduism with darkness and Christianity with light. It will be seen in the next section how her ideals matched with the tales of these stories. Intertwined within this section of the thesis will be Saththianadhan’s series of theories about the male mind, and an analysis by many modern day writers on her contribution to feminism.

The Constraints of Hinduism: “The Orthodox Hindu Wife”

In her first text, *Kamala, The Story of a Hindu Child-Wife*, Saththianadhan tells the story of a young girl who is accustomed to the traditional life of a Hindu Indian woman. This novel, published in 1894, was one of the first books written in English with a female protagonist who was an Indian woman. This story gives readers a sense of the social injustices of the time and the struggles that many Hindu woman faced. In the title alone one can take away that the character is a child bride, a popular Hindu practice at the time for young girls to be married off as a way to protect their virginity. In the story the young girl from the highest caste of Hinduism, which is Brahmin, struggles with the pressures of society and a life of servitude. This novel is the core of Saththianadhan’s beliefs and the fuel to her mission of reformation within society for women. It was written to make known the conditions that many were submerged in, and the importance of reform within these societies.

The following information relies on the accounts of Mangala Subramaniam in *The Power of Women's Organizing: Gender, Caste, and Class in India*. Child-marriage was the cause of many deaths among young girls as well as infants. It was not until 1929 that child marriages were banned in response to the the The Child Marriage Restraint Act of 1929, also known as the Sarda Act. Not only were death tolls high among young girls, but also poor families would send their daughters away as a way to lessen the burden economically. The lives of infants born to young mothers were of great risk, often developing at a slower rate both physically and mentally. In addition, leaving their homes as children these girls often are subjected to physical abuse in her husbands home. Not only were these issues the basis of Saththianadhan’s texts, but also the foundation to many of her feminist theories, including the need for the “new woman” who was

independent and educated. Saththianadhan uses the female protagonist Kamala as a symbolic representation of the Indian Hindu wife who is bound to the ideals of society regarding social practices such as: child-marriage, cruel relationship with mother-in-laws, becoming a widow, dependency on husband's family, and becoming an outcast. Saththianadhan uses the character of Kamala as a mark of injustice and as a weapon of social reform. The story takes the reader into the life of a young Brahmin girl who matures into her role as a Hindu wife, and the struggles she endures with the daunting religious system and its customs.

The story opens up with the beautiful imagery of rice fields and mountains as young Kamala lives in the abundance of nature's beauty. This was a pleasure unknown to many Hindu girls who were occupied in learning her future wifely duties. Kamala lives in a picturesque world where she was free and expressive:

On a little hillock, not far away, are a few trees, which appear to catch and retain the halo of departing light in their branches, and through them glimmers the suffused redness of the sunset sky. In the glowing light between the trees, the form of a little girl may be distinctly seen. It is that of Kamala, the daughter of the old Brahman recluse. (*Kamala, The Story of a Hindu Child-Wife 21*)

This is a complete contrast to the life she will live in the future. Kamala's father, a man who had become a sanyasi (monk), had a love for nature and this love was instilled in Kamala. Kamala, who was born in the village area of India, lived a life as a child without the pressures of society and was free of any worldly worries. Even though she had to tend to her father's needs she still lived as a child wondering through the gardens. Saththianadhan depicts within this character the

innocence and freedom that young girls have before they are sent to a life of duties as a wife and a mother. Her spirit is allowed to roam like the wild life around her.

In the next scene a visitor has come to see Kamala's father, and it becomes the introduction to a life of hardships. Her father sadly tells Kamala that "you are to be married, and I can't help it, it was arranged sometime ago (31)." It is here that young Kamala does not understand why her father is so upset, Kamala has always adhered to her roles as a daughter, and having lost her mother when she she was a child, her father depended on her greatly to do many chores including cooking and cleaning. She knows she is to be married and assumes that her cooking skills would be adequate for marriage:

The little girl anticipated the event only thinking of it as a prospective gala day in her life. But now, why did her father speak to her in an apologetic tone and why did he look so troubled? Why did he say, 'I cant help it. I wish it was otherwise. You must go and be like other girls, toil for your own food and be at the mercy of others. Work! What was there new in that? Even now she was brought up to work. Did she not know how to cook food? The little girl's eyes had opened opened wide with wonder and she looked at her father and said, "Yes, Dada! I know how to work, don't fear.' (*Kamala, The Story of a Hindu Child-Wife* 31)

It is in this discourse between a father and daughter, Saththianadhan masterfully depicts the innocence of a child and a parent's deep remorse for his child before she is to live a life of hardship. This passage foreshadows the remainder of the novel and implies the contrasting life she will have. A part of Kamala's childhood is free until she is linked to the practices of society and is to be married. Saththianadhan uses this emotional passage as a way to share the constraints

that even parents undergo in society. In Hindu customs it is the norm for young girls to have arranged marriages at the age decided upon by the parents, so when the time comes although reluctant to let ones child be married off, it is a custom that must happen. One is able to see the deep grief Kamala's father has for her future, and the innocence of a child who does not quite comprehend the challenges she must overcome.

In the next section, Kamala marries a complete stranger as part of an arranged marriage, and in the beginning months of marriage he leaves for the city to study. It is in these first months that Kamala realizes the reason for her fathers dreadful face when he told her that she was to be married:

She began to make acquaintances of girls of her on age, and their talk revealed a new and dreadful world to her. Her life was no more the life of her childhood. The sweet innocent freedom that belongs to it seemed to have vanished. She learnt many a thing that horrified her. Her eyes would dilate with fear and wonder, and she grew more reserved.

(Kamala, The Story of a Hindu Child-Wife 44)

Kamala must lose her childhood pleasures and assume the duties of a traditional Hindu wife. Being married at a young age, Kamala is unable to live the life of a child and must quickly become a young woman. Sathianadhan regarded the early marriage of young girls as the cause to many women living a life to serve her husband and children, which as a result leaves no time to have an education or develop her own thought process. This meekness and muteness that resonates in Kamala after marriage is the issue which Sathianadhan speaks so openly about. The submission to serve ones in-laws, and husband, creates a woman with no way to speak up or indicate her own thoughts.

In this new life, Kamala also sees the way her friend Bhagirathi from the next house is treated by her husband. She is physically abused, and the cries of her friend are seen by Kamala. In one incident, Kamala recalls Bhagirathi leaving her husband after he was found with a mistress in the house. In leaving, she broke her marriage bangles which were sacred under the Hindu laws, and she went to her childhood home. In India, for a woman to leave her husband's house and live at her parents' house was a disgrace to both families. In the story, Bhagirathi is brought back to her husband's house by her mother who had abused her for leaving her husband's house:

‘I won't go in, mother! You can kill me with your own hands but I won't enter this grave,’ she said with firmness. It was a painful sight for Kamala. A number of women gathered from the neighboring houses, but very little sympathy was shown for Bhagirathi...’
‘Shame to you, girl,’ said another. ‘Don't you know that if a man be tied to you once, you cannot free yourself from him, even if he be an ass. The halter is round your neck, let it be wooden or golden, it is all the same’...go inside and fall to his feet. (*Kamala, The Story of a Hindu Child-Wife 60*)

This was the life that many young Hindu girls lived. A life of obedience and to allow her husband to be the dictator of her life. This story of Kamala's friend is one of relevance to the time and was the tragic life many Hindu women had. Sathianadhan uses this story to share the contradicting views cast upon by society on an unfaithful marriage. The ideals that a woman must adhere to her husband's desires and stay quiet. The ideals that physical abuse on a woman is not a wrongful act but a way to make her a better wife for her own good. It is in this scene that Kamala sees the dictating side of a husband which was unknown to her before. She begins to

understand the constant struggles a woman must overcome, and her position in society, which is of no value.

In this new married life, Kamala needs the permission of her in-laws to go outside the house, and she is in constant scrutiny by her mother-in-law in all that she does in her day. Kamala often goes to her father-in-law who reminds her of her own father, and he is sympathetic to the girl. However, her mother-in-law Ramabai and sister-in-law Gungi are cruel to Kamala. They regard her as a burden because she was from a poor family and often talk about how she didn't even know who her own mother was. Sathianadhan depicts in this section of the text the Hindu custom of dowry, a sum of money or jewels given to a husband's family from the bride's family. Such practices were the burdens for many families with daughters, and encouraged the desire for a son. When dowry seemed insufficient to a husband's family, the daughter-in-law was then treated very poorly, leaving her with no position in her husband's family.

In addition, Sathianadhan emphasizes the ever-so-popular relationship of the evil mother-in-law and the daughter-in-law in many Indian families. A constant battle for their son's love, encompassed by jealousy and a higher position in the family. It is often depicted that mothers-in-law were known to treat their new daughters-in-law with cruelty, a concept which has for hundreds of years been the misery of many Indian women. This hostile environment which the young girl has to live, also comes with the territory of physical and mental abuse. The constant struggle for the mother-in-law to sustain her position in the household's hierarchy and for her son's love, thus surrounding all the duties of a household upon the daughter-in-law. In the story Kamala lives a routinized life filled with chores:

In the morning, long before day-break, there was a stir in the house, and the mother-in-law would wake the girl who slept near her. Thus aroused Kamala hurried out through the quadrangle to the back of the house, for it was her duty to get the water vessels and fill them up with water... Then came the cow-dunging of the kitchen and front yard, and the working out of various flower designs on the cow-dunged floor with white shell powder, at which difficult feat every Hindu girl is an expert. Next came the buying of vegetables... work in the kitchen. She was expected to help in cooking... required to prepare baths, keep the ointments and other things ready, and if anything was missing a shower of abuse was hurled upon her... The food was served by Ramabai while Kamala stood looking in behind a door. (*Kamala, The Story of a Hindu Child-Wife* 57)

Kamala did her duties that were asked of her but is saddened when her mother-in-law lies about how she does not do any work and how her poor daughter Gungi does Kamala's share as well. Ramabai even goes far as saying that Kamala does not eat all her food because she wants people to know that they starve her and continues with saying that Kamala sees herself better than them. Kamala is unable to defend herself and lives a life of obedience and abuse. Society carries a heavy importance in the lives of these people, as Ramabai is so concerned with what the "people" would say. This was the everyday routine of many of India's Hindu wives as they were subjected to a life of chores and obedience. Satthianadhan uses the character of Kamala to convey the injustices against young girls who have no one to speak up for them, and have no say in how they live their lives.

The traditional Hindu wife accepts the burdens and hardships that come along with marriage. Often justifying such challenges as her own destiny as taught by society. This notion is

seen within Kamala as she accepts her life as her own fate, as she is unable to express herself and is given a life of solitude:

All these had taught her one lesson, the great lesson of humanity, love for others and the need of doing one's duty at any cost... This was the sum and the substance of Kamala's moral code, and this gave her an impetus to be good. But there was another kind of teaching mingled with it all and that was that whether she was bad or good, whether she enjoyed pleasure or suffered pain, she ought not to grumble but accept it meekly, for it was fate. This gave her very little consolation. It only made her feeble in purpose and in will. She lost even her her simple interest in life; for life was a poor spiritless affair...

(Kamala, The Story of a Hindu Child-Wife 58)

This passage resonates the beliefs of numerous traditional wives who feel that they must just live this life of restrictions and accept it with humility. Sathianadhan depicts the average Indian Hindu woman who is meek and modest, and is conditioned to take any pain or suffering headed her way because she is a woman. In addition, Sathianadhan shows that it is this open acceptance that makes the woman unable to evolve as a human being in her interests, and therefore she feels lifeless.

Kamala's one escape is nature, she uses the wilderness as a way to be free from her issues. A constant reminder of the worry free childhood she once had. The time where she was free of responsibilities or any kind of physical or verbal abuse. As the story continues, Kamala's husband Ganesh sees the misery she feels and they become closer. During this time, unknown to anyone else, Ganesh teaches Kamala things that he has learned and she starts to prosper. But soon he withholds her from any educational information because of society's ideologies on an

educated woman. Women were not supposed to be educated like men, they were only supposed to have knowledge about their duties as a wife and mother. According to society, women who were educated turned away from doing their traditional obligations, and would create a wife that was outspoken, unlike the ideal modest and meek wife. It is here that Ganesh meets Sai again, a woman he met in Rampur. Sai is an educated woman and therefore is different from the uneducated women Ganesh is used to. Ganesh is captivated by Sai's intelligence and worldly manners. However to Ganesh's father, she is the epitome of what a woman should not be, he shares his insight on Sai as he says:

Do you see the difference between being educated and uneducated? Who would you like as your wife? A simple, innocent modest girl afraid to open her mouth, or a bold, clever woman wielding such a dreadful power over others as this woman wields? Yet it is education that has made her what she is. (*Kamala, The Story of a Hindu Child-Wife* 68)

This dialogue from Ganesh's father represents the thinking amongst many of India's men. The notion that education creates a un-tamed woman, whereas, if kept subjected to the life of a traditional Hindu woman, she will know only of her wifely duties. Education gives power and thought, while social conditioning hinders that thought process. This was the forefront of Sathianadhan's theories as she believed that education was the key to unleash women from such man-made restraints. Sathianadhan interprets the psyche of a man and uses his self-esteem and the intimidation of the power of a woman as the cause of such practices "if his wife possessed qualities that he lacked, he would not tolerate it. (*The Emergence of Feminism in India* 32)

According to Sathianadhan, an intellectual woman will understand that such practices are made only for the delight of the man, a woman who is conditioned into these practices lacks

the process to understand the injustices surrounding her. In her *Gender and Imperialism*, Anagol underlines this theory by Saththianadhan, as she states:

Krupabai's critique of the nature of women's oppression in Hindu society and her arguments for the education of women helped women not only to counteract the onslaught of Hindu vilification and contempt for women, but in a larger sense, to help women break through the rigidity of the roles prescribed for them. In the first place she maintained that marriage should not be the only goal of a woman's life. Second, she argued that education led women to develop some freedom of thought and action, to begin question the social tyranny and injustice they were subjected to, and to become self-reliant. Third, she argued that this process of women's self-realization was the only way for the India nation to progress. (*Gender and Imperialism*, "Indian Christian women and Indigenous feminism, 1850-1920" 88)

Saththianadhan renders the man as a insecure human being that uses the oppression on woman as a way to control them and boast his self-confidence. Through society's conditioning girls are made to become mute and submissive. Through the restrictions created by men, women for centuries have abided to such traditions. This was a concept in which Saththianadhan wanted to clearly make known in her texts. Kamala is the meek and mute wife, but Sai is the educated and outspoken woman. As Ganesh and Sai become closer, Kamala blames herself for her husbands affair. Also a typical notion was that women were blamed for their husbands affairs, and as a result blamed themselves for the unfaithfulness. As a traditional Hindu wife she is made to stay with her husband no matter what and is warged as his property.

However, Kamala crosses such boundaries and leaves her husband. In this section of the text, Saththianadhan introduces the reader to the alter ego of Kamala. The voice within that wants to be free of these social bonds and customs. Kamala finds her sense of individualism but soon she comes back to her husband's home as she has no place to go, leading a future of uncertainty. A Hindu wife only has the shelter from her in-laws and without that she would be dead. This is a point that Saththianadhan makes clear, women did not have a choice in such situations, it was to either die out in the world or be alive in her husband's home. Towards the end of the story, Kamala sees a change in her mother-in-law's attitude after a visit from Kamala's childhood friend Ramchander. Soon Kamala finds out her father has passed away and he has left her with a substantial amount of wealth. She is not a "penniless girl" anymore, she had more money and status than her in-laws. She is treated with kindness and respect by her mother-in-law, upon this new found wealth. This is also an implication which Saththianadhan wanted readers to understand, that money gave one economic independence. With no need to depend on others, economic independence gave women the upper hand, a sense of freedom. Soon after, Ganesh dies and Kamala becomes a widow, losing her first born child soon after.

In this ending section of the text, Kamala faces the impending traditions of being a Hindu widow. Ramchander professes his love for her, and wants her to live a happy and free life with him. Although Kamala loves Ramchander and wants to live a life with him, she denies him his proposal. Here, one can see the battle between Kamala the Hindu wife and the Kamala's alter ego who wants a life unchained from society's rules. However, Kamala's life in such a society denies her a life of happiness and joy, but alludes her to a life of isolation and misery. The cruel restrictions of society prevents her to be free and in love:

‘Ask me not that,’ she said, with a shudder. ‘It is too much for me to think of. Did we wives not die on the funeral pyre in days of old? Did we not court the water and the floods? What has come over us now? My heart beats in response to yours, but betray me not, thou tempting heart. Look not on my face. I am the accursed among women. There is something wrong in my nature, and that is why the gods have hood round my neck; taken my lord and master, and have cursed me. No! What you ask is too much...I am but a broken vessel, fit only to be thrown aside and spat on. (*Kamala, The Story of a Hindu Child-Wife* 156)

This monologue by Kamala presents the tragedy of Kamala and Ramchander’s love story. Kamala indeed loves Ramchander and wants to spend her life with him, but being conditioned into a society filled with the proper way a Hindu wife should live her life, Kamala is left feeling that there is something greatly wrong with her because she has such feelings for another man. Now this young women who has lost her husband and child, must live in solitude to approve those who set boundaries in the world. Saththianadhan uses the example of the Hindu customs bestowed upon widows, like jumping on their husband’s pyre, as an example of the sacrifice a Hindu wife should make. By using this example, Kamala feels her thoughts are forbidden and that she is not worthy to be a Hindu woman. Like the way society views widows, Kamala too sees herself in the same way. She does not believe that she deserves a new life, but that she should be the obedient Hindu widow she is supposed to be. In this section, Kamala’s alter ego loses and society has won. Saththianadhan shares this ending to depict the traditions and superstitions that stifle the happiness of one’s life. Kamala thus lives her life under the constructs of society.

Christianity “The New Age of the New Woman”

In contrast, Saththianadhan’s autobiographical novel *Saguna, A Story of Native Christian Life*, written in 1895, brings forth an alternate perspective of a female protagonist. This novel was the first autobiographical novel to be written in English by an Indian woman, written in 1895. This alone was a giant leap for an Indian woman of the nineteenth century. In the novel Saththianadhan constructs the “new woman” and uses Christianity, western progressive thinking, and colonialism as the pillars of this new concept. Saththianadhan implies through her text that the only way to free one’s self from the social restraints of society, one must abandon the religion in which the restraints take place. In the text *The Emergence of Feminism*, Anagol states:

The early feminist theorist Krupabai ...went further in her analysis by not only investigating Hindu men’s resistance to granting equal rights to women but also showing how Hinduism negatively affected the attitudes and stunted the personalities of Hindu women. Krupabai was interested in showing how knowledge was produced about women, and her feminist critique of Hinduism clearly depicts how and why Indian women came to be represented as inherently sinful and promiscuous, justifying male control of their sexuality. (*The Emergence of Feminism* 31)

Saththianadhan suggests that the tyrannical practices put within the religion of Hinduism creates the oppressive woman, while Christianity did not obtain such practices. Christian conversion which was heavily exercised in the nineteenth century, brought forth from the west the notion of education for females, and modern thinking. As a child who was born into a Christian convert family, with an education by missionaries, Saththianadhan was able to see first-hand the effects of such western education in regards to Christian religion.

In *Saguna*, one can understand the contrasting lives of Kamala and Saguna and the struggles both women face within their religious backgrounds. Saththianadhan opens the text with a background of her childhood which emphasizes the core of her beliefs:

In the following pages, I shall in my own way try to present a faithful picture of the experience and thoughts of a simple Indian girl, whose life has been highly influenced by a new order of things— an order of things which at the present time is spreading its influence to a greater or lesser extent over the whole of her native land. I was one of a family of fourteen children, my father and mother being Brahmin converts to Christianity. My father died early, leaving us to the sole care of an orthodox mother, who though her faith in her new religion was strong, was still full of Hindu notions of things. (*Saguna, A Story of Native Christian Life* 20)

Like Saththianadhan, Saguna is the character that represents a new age in which reform for education was taking place, thus creating the new educated, modern, progressive-thinking woman. Kamala struggles with the Hindu customs, while Saguna struggles with the deaths of family members, her constant focus to strengthen her union with Christ, and the good and bad that come along with western views. Saththianadhan associates Christianity as the new reform in religion, the way to unhinge women who have been oppressed for years. In the text Saththianadhan adds the main events of her life that transformed her into the person she came to be. From the loss of her father and then her older brother Bhaskar, to her mother's Hindu ideals, studying in England, and her relationship with her husband and Christ.

In the opening of the text, she gives insight to the early history of her parents' life. She then proceeds to talk about the stories her mother has told her about Hindu customs and stories

of young Hindu girls, one of which Sathianadhan uses to share the toils that Hindu girls overcame and accepted. In this story of a young Hindu girl she raises much similarities to the life of Kamala, in the sense that they both faced many challenges from society. Radha is the name of the girl in the story and Sathianadhan uses this story as a way to express the constraints in which Hinduism was felt on women, in addition to build on her point about the importance of the new age. Sathianadhan often associates Hinduism with darkness and Christianity with the light:

My brother in his usual earnest way remarked that it is just like this, shadowy, dark, mystic, weird, with superstition and bigotry lurking in every corner, before the light of Christianity comes into the land. When the sun rises, he said, all the glory of the trees and the rocks comes into view, each thing assumes its proper and is drawn out greater beauty and perfection. So it is when the sunbeams of Christianity dispel the darkness of superstition in a land. (*Saguna, A Story of Native Christian Life* 23)

Sathianadhan uses Christianity to symbolize the freedom that is felt within the religion that only evolves a person, a complete contrast to Hinduism that uses superstition as a means to justify social practices. Sathianadhan states that it is through education that such social practices could be eliminated. In addition, unlike Kamala, who is taught that marriage is the ultimate success, Saguna disagrees. Saguna believes success comes from education, and her union with Christ. Being an autobiographical text, Saguna reflects Sathianadhan's beliefs that marriage is not what defines a woman, but it is her knowledge and individuality that does. The contrasts between Kamala and Saguna are numerous, but most of all Saguna is educated and successful in her own desires of attaining knowledge, while Kamala is unable to be free of her duties, and does not have a way to attain knowledge outside of her husband's house.

In *Gender and Imperialism*, Anagol explains the relationship in this context of Christianity and Hinduism, and further examines the beliefs of Sathianadhan:

It is suggested that Christian life is of a 'purer faith' and 'higher culture' than Hindu life and that it encourages open-mindedness in those who profess it. Thus, Saguna is given complete choice in pursuing a profession — a freedom unthinkable for Hindu girls of her day except in the most radical circles. Saguna's female friends are allowed to interact freely with young men and choose their spouses— once again contrast with the Hindu customs. (*Gender and Imperialism* 90)

Most of all what appeals to Saguna in Christianity is the equality she sees between men and women. A concept that is unattainable in Hinduism. This equality is appealing and transforms the traditional woman into the modern woman. A sense of reform is seen within Christianity, and it adheres to the education of women which promotes freedom of thought, and as a result is essential to her identity.

In a passage of the text Saguna notices many Indians who have adopted the mannerisms of the West, but lack the understanding in the very importance of being open-minded and liberal in one's thinking:

It is really disgusting to see how many of you imitate the English in manners, dress and other superficial things without imbibing their liberal spirit, that spirit which gives to a woman equal privileges with a man, and credits her with noble and disinterested actions. (*Saguna, A Story of Native Christian Life* 78)

To Saguna or Sathianadhan, what captivates their spirit to the west and Christianity is its liberal mindset which is a foreign concept. A rather reflective point in Sathianadhan's text, because at

the center of her beliefs is the impending importance of the equality of women. It is within this concept that she divides Hinduism and Christianity. According to Sathianadhan, Hinduism is associated with superstitions, social practices, and restrictions on women. Where as Christianity links itself with progressive thinking, female education, and equality, the three components to emancipate the oppressed women of India.

In conclusion, as one of the earliest feminist theorists, Sathianadhan contends that it is through leaving the old religion of Hinduism, which is tied to many social practices that have oppressed woman for centuries, that she could be free. Christianity represented the new age, a time of social reform, education, and equality for women. Sathianadhan makes her argument by sharing the contrasting stories of a Hindu girl and a Christian girl. She explores deeply into the male psyche to understand the reasons for why women have been degraded for centuries, and why the female existence was conditioned and controlled as a means of livelihood in societies. With her cunning arguments it is clear for one to understand the extent in which humans will go for power and control over another. In the 1998 republished edition of *Kamala, The Story of a Hindu Child-Wife*, edited by Chandani Lokuge, Lokuge states in the introduction of the text:

The man-woman relationship as fictionalized in *Kamala*— analyses in the context of later feminist views regarding woman's identity in relation to man universalized by Simone de Beauvoir and Virginia Woolf—suggests that as a feminist, Sathianadhan was very much ahead of her time. (*Kamala, The Story of a Hindu Child-Wife* 8)

Sathianadhan was truly ahead of her time, she brought forth the deep issues that were integrated into daily lives of many Indian women. She believed that the ego of a man is what wishes for the woman to be degraded, only to make himself heighten in power. The insecurities of a man

compromised a woman's right to think for herself. Equality for many women of India was at the forefront of Sathianadhan's issues with society, and was the topic of her novels and essays. She believed that education was the way to emancipate a woman from such historical ideologies. She not only created the first English autobiographical text as an Indian woman, but created the first Indian woman protagonist, leaving a platform for future woman writers in the decades to come. She used her texts as a vessel to bring awareness of the cruel social practices that many Indian women endured. Sathianadhan was truly a pioneer in the evolution of feminism, unafraid of the boundaries she crossed.

Chapter Two:

Cornelia Sorabji — “The Crusader”

The dedication instilled in Saththianadhan in helping the marginalized women of India was of the same essence in Cornelia Sorabji. As a very educated women, Sorabji choose to help those who were scrutinized in society and were helpless. As a lawyer, instead of practicing for a richer cliental acquiring wealth and power, she worked for the marginalized women of India. It was education that allowed her to pursue a career in law, and this hard earned law degree became her weapon in life to help these restricted women. In particular, Sorabji spent her time practicing law in defense of the Purdahnashins. These were women who were not allowed to be seen by men on the outside, and could not subject themselves to a court that was entailed with men. As a young child the notion of social reforms and progressive thinking were on the forefront of her education. In her autobiography *India Calling*, she shares her open-mindedness and education as a result of her progressive-thinking parents:

There is one circumstance, then, in my life, of which I may boast, unashamed— and that is my inheritance, the fact that I am the child of my Parents. For there are no two people in all the world whom I would have chosen of my parents ...Of my mother...She had a very special type of courage, an intuition and understanding in heart and mind, which made her free of all things created, whether in trouble or joy, which made the wounded turn to her instinctively, whatever their race or creed; an intelligence which anticipated the needs of a progressive generation; and gifts of construction and organization which were unknown to the Indians of her day. (*India Calling* 14)

Sorabji's father and mother's dedication in helping others in need, and the idea of freedom from societal traditions, was the foundation to her beliefs. Not only was she the epitome of the "new Indian woman," but was also the voice for these helpless women. She aided these women to think and to fight for what was right in the court, and in their homes. A firm believer in the social rights of women, she believed women needed to take action for what was theirs in a male-dominated society. Cornelia Sorabji truly took part in the evolution of feminism.

In Priya Joshi's *In Another Country*, Joshi includes a quote from Ahmed Ali, a member of the All-India Progressive Writers' Association, that states:

[the Progressive Writers'] Movement was essentially an intellectual revolt against the outmoded past, the vitiated tendencies in contemporary thought and literature, yet indifference of people to their human condition, against acquiescence to foreign rule, enslavement to practice and beliefs. both social and religious, based on ignorance, against the problems of poverty and exploitation, and complete inanity to progress and life. (*In Another Country* 207)

Sorabji was a progressive writer herself and shared the similar goals of the Progressive Writers Movement that wanted more social reform within social practices that restricted one from happiness and freedom. Through her British education she was given the tools to think and to formulate her ideas. Through this formulation she was able to understand the injustices surrounding her, whether that was in attending a law school filled with men, or defending women succumbed to social injustices. Her texts included her protests and her beliefs, becoming a form of progressive thinking through writing. Although "feminism" was only in its early stages in Europe, and little-known as a term in India, she was the very meaning of a feminist. She was a

woman who was the first to study law from India or in Britain, and believed that it was right for a female to study and practice law.

Sorabji unconsciously was the stepping stone to the development of feminism in India. Without women like Sathianadhan, Naidu, and Sorabji who have become the foundation, India would have been in a deeply unprogressive and oppressive state for many women. This chapter relies heavily on the accounts of Suparna Gooptu in *Cornelia Sorabji: India's Pioneer Woman Lawyer: a Biography*. In the preceding subsections on Cornelia Sorabji, I will analyze two texts by Sorabji and discuss the connections her written works share with her activism for marginalized women in India. The first text is a series of short stories titled *Love and Life Behind the Purdah*. The second is her autobiography titled *India Calling*. In addition, I will draw links between some of her short stories and her own accounts from her autobiography. Sorabji recalls in the introduction of her text how she came up with the title of her autobiography:

Yes— it is true that I have been privileged to know two hearthstones, to become homed in two countries, England and India. But though it is difficult to say which “home” I love best, there has never, at any time, been the remotest doubt as to which called to see with the most insistence...Always, early and late, throughout the years, it has been “India Calling...” (*India Calling* 5)

This very quote is at the core of Sorabji’s work and her dedication to help the women of India. I believe the greatest analysis in this chapter will be on the narratives that are directly influenced by real life events in Cornelia Sorabji’s life, as they are explained in her autobiography.

Sorabji’s *Love and Life Behind the Purdah* is a collection of narratives that deals with the lives of Purdahnashins, Zoroastrian women, and stories of Hindu women who live in rural

villages. These narratives include fictional short stories, and non-fiction accounts of specific women whom Sorabji has encountered in her life. In the text's introductory note a small quote taken within the note paraphrases the elegance of this text said by two reviewers named, Harriot Dufferin and Ava (no last name inserted within the review): "The aim and ambition of Miss Sorabji's life has been to benefit and to serve her country women, and in these pages will be found evidences of her deep sympathy and affection for them (*Love and Life Behind the Purdah* 8)." Sorabji's passion is seen within these narratives as they magnify the private domestic lives of these women. In addition, a letter from Lord Hobhouse, an English lawyer and judge, written in October of 1901, was sent to Sorabji and included within her autobiography which was published in 1934. Lord Hobhouse was delicate in the handling of his review because he was an English man. He appreciated and took notice of the numerous factors of importance within the text, but also explains his awkward position to comment on something that he in particular has never seen. However, he admires Sorabji's expression of such private topics as he states:

Nevertheless, with all my respect for the reign of custom and tradition, and with full perception of danger of rude interference with the delicate issues of family life and personal feelings, it is consistent to advocate plans by which their inconvenient consequences may be lessened. The inconveniences attending on the seclusion of an Indian lady when she has dealings with the outer world are constantly coming to the surface... They cannot escape from the responsibilities of ownership, more can they rightly perform the duties or receive the benefits attaching to it, without entering into the legal relations of the world outside. (A Letter from Lord Hobhouse, October 1901)

Lord Hobhouse reviewed and tried to understand the logistics which Sorabji's countrywomen had to deal with. He assists the affirmations of Sorabji by concluding that the seclusion of women is a "drawback" in declaring what is rightfully theirs. He also includes that in such cases it is essential that the person doing the trades with the Purdahdashin women need to ensure that they clearly understand the terms and conditions of the deal. Often the person performing a deal about property of a Purdahdashin was a man who was a trusted family friend, usually the same person for decades for a family.

In *India Calling* (20), Sorabji recalls this type of incident that she experienced as a child that had inspired her to become a practicing lawyer—a career that would allow her to protect the Purdahdashins from such treacherous acts. Sorabji remembers as a child seeing a woman weeping, and talking with speed to her mother. Sorabji's mother sat and listened to the helpless women, comforting them with reassurance of a solution. The woman who was a Purdahdashin was crying about how a "man-of-business," referring to the a man that made deals with Purdahdashin families regarding the property, tricked her and took all her possessions in his name. Although she could not personally do the transaction, he was a trusted man-of-business to the family and was given verbal directions. The woman did not know how to write or read, and so she was asked to use symbols to represent her name. However, the man-of-business forged the blank documents and had all the woman's property sent to him. With the lack of education in writing and reading, dealings were either misunderstood or manipulated by people. Such restrictions on a large group of Indian women were only one example of the injustices surrounding them.

“The Pestilence of Noonday”

Sorabji’s first narrative in *Love and Life Behind the Purdah* is called “The Pestilence of Noonday” (1901). She begins the chapter sharing the story of a young Indian woman, who from the beginning defines the role of a orthodox Hindu wife according to society. The seclusion she faces is evident because she is a woman, while the men are able to roam freely. The opening of the narrative is a discourse between a husband and wife, as she insists that he will forget her when he has to go off into the world. In his reply he states:

“Yes! ’tis not unlikely.” was the response. “I shall have many things to interest me: knowledge to acquire, the world to sample, a name to make. How, then, will there be room for thought of women, and petting, and suchlike? But when I am tired of it all I’ll come back to this forgotten little spot, and I’ll find you just the same, sitting here among the lotuses and marigolds, and with a heart full of love for me as it is now— rather fuller, perhaps, with the forced repression!” (*Love and Life Behind the Purdah* 14)

In this dialogue from the husband, Sorabji points out the contradiction within his sentences. A man was able to build his intellect and explore the world, while a women stayed inside her home like a caged bird waiting for her husband. The reference by the man to the words “same” and “sitting here” creates this atmosphere of boredom and silence. She is still and quiet like the lotuses and the marigolds. She replies with a teasing comment saying: “Oh, lord, how unkind you are! I’ve spoiled you!” To her remarks he takes offense saying: “Now listen. Seriously, Sita, you drop this nonsense. I am sorry that I let them educate you. It has given you notions which patch clumsily onto the heritage of traditions into which you were born. Remember you are still a Hindu wife” (15). He goes on to say that it was not because they loved each other that they

were married to one another, but because the astrologer said the “okay” and that the dowry was “sufficiently attractive.” Out of the first page alone, Sorabji shares the stupid customs put into society to take away ones freedom. Customs that bind people to loveless marriages which are fueled by social practices and money.

In the continuing sections, before he is off to go somewhere (where is not stated in the chapter), he gives her rules to follow using phrases like: “letting them teach you,” “let you call me by my name,” “raise your eyes in my presence,” “I warn you,” “be thankful,” “little Sita,” “you will,” “best please me” (16). These phrases emphasize the unimportance many Hindu women were given, and often were treated like a children who are given limitations and authority. Sorabji uses this depiction of a traditional husband and wife to shed light on the tiny role a Hindu wife had in a family. He expects her to stay home, take care of his family, and wait for his return. The story then proceeds with a new plot nine years later, and she is still waiting for his return.

“A Living Sacrifice”

Sorabji depicts the cruelty and oppression forced on many Indian women. One of the narratives, titled “A Living Sacrifice” (84), entails the story of a young wife and her encounter with *sati*, the burning of a wife on her dead husband’s pyre. The story takes place in the year 1828, in the Ganges valley. In the opening of the narrative, it is of a woman who is in distress talking to her twin sister about how she does not want to let go of her duties as a wife and mother. Tani, who once “dyed her nails” and “donned in the brightest garments” now faces a new destiny, a dreadful one. Listening to Tani is her twin sister Dwarki. Dwarki was married as a

child to a man that is facing imprisonment in the Andamans. It is unknown to anyone of his whereabouts, whether he is alive or dead, but she is still considered a married woman. However, Tani's husband has just died and the story enters into the discussion between the two sisters. Tania shares her fear with Dwarki about the social practice of sati and she says, "No! No! I cannot do it!..." "It is impossible. Dost remember the day when I caught the bit of live firewood in my hands! Hi! how it burnt" (84). While the preparations for the sati is taking place, Tani pleads with her twin sister if she knew of any solution to get out of this painful tradition. In light of finding a solution, Dwarki gives Tani opium in attempts to get Tani to fall into a deep sleep, so that Dwarki can take her place on the pyre. This is the only way Dwarki can take the place of Tani without her protesting about such a sacrifice. Dwarki goes ahead with the procedures for the sati:

Her marriage bangles she broke—final attestation of widowhood and a shudder ran through the poor girl's frame. For the first time it occurred to her that she might be tempting the gods to make her a widow of truth. Was she imperiling the life of a convict?

Too late to retract now. (*Love and Life Behind the Purdah* 85)

As Dwarki lays over the pyre, bound by rope, she hears her sister running past the crowd of people. But it is too late and Dwarki concludes by saying "Almost was the drug a waste!" Sorabji uses this story to explain the sacrifice women had to make in these social practices that take women away from their children and rid them of a life. In this story, a narrative filled with twists, Tani is lucky to have a twin sister who sacrifices her life for her. However, this was not the story for many Hindu widows, this was the daunting destiny. Women would be stripped of any notion of being a bride, and then tossed into a fire to burn with her already dead husband.

Tani, a character that represents the lives of many Hindu women, wants to live a life to take care of her children, and wear the garments that make her joyous. Her life is completely taken away because of a practice created by society. Through Sorabji's series of fictional narratives, one is able to understand the torment that these practices caused. Sorabji uses the everyday social practices as the themes for her narratives, with characters that symbolize the struggles of many Indian women.

The constant division between gender and caste is the underlining factor to many of these social practices. Traditions left as the only means of knowledge and therefor creating conditions for people within a society, and as a result abiding by the same intellect. This intellect is referred to as the "Indian intellect" as seen in Sara Suleri's *The Rhetoric of English India*:

...the structure of caste mirrored the peculiarities of the "Indian intellect": it is clear that the growth of the caste instinct must have been greatly promoted and stimulated by certain characteristic peculiarities of the Indian intellect —its lax hold of facts, its indifference to action, its absorption in dreams, its exaggerated reverence for tradition, its passion for endless division and sub-division, its acute sense of minute technical distinctions, its pedantic tendency to press a principle to its furthest logical conclusion, and its remarkable capacity for imitating and adapting social ideas and usage of whatever origin. (*The Rhetoric of English India* 143)

Passed on from generation to generation is this intellect based off of tradition. Thus, the idea of change is problematic and therefor averted. It is through education which is the building of knowledge that can only break such tradition. Building one's knowledge will allow this preset intellect to broaden and transform into higher order thinking. Sorabji implies through her texts

that it is this predestined intellect that degrades the status of a women, and confines her to a meek and modest life.

“Greater Love”

Sorabji’s next short story, titled “Greater Love” introduces a series of different types of Hindu women in society introducing the character Kamala. At Kamala’s *kunkun* party, a gathering of married women to bless the new wife, the story presents a series of characters. Kamala, a young Hindu wife-to-be, is righteous and kind. In this party she has prepared an array of fruits and decorations made of flowers. Unknown to her, the women speak ill of her elaborately decorated party:

“They get some notions by going to school, these children,” said one sourvisaged old dame. “You cant call the books and clothes orthodox; the practice is undoubly new, and therefore to be discouraged. Time enough they married her to that lout of a Vakil. He feeds well, and keeps her buys over household duties. I warrant she wastes money, though. At what rate did you buy those grapes, Kamala?” she called. (*Love and life Behind the Purdah* 62)

One can understand from this passage the thoughts that women have regarding education, considering it as a way of distraction from a Hindu wife’s duties. Education was clearly an uproar to these set rules and traditions, thus by educating ones self meant change within the community and its practices. By having a different way of thinking meant that such traditions could be broken a fear in such societies. To hold onto tradition was key in sustaining such a community.

As the story proceeds the social norms for a Hindu wife becomes more evident. At the party is Matha Shri, who is the only woman who did not have any children. Women who did not have children after being married are seen in society as not being blessed by God, and considered as a superstition for young brides. Kamala sees no difference in Matha Shri, and they have a enjoyable conversation. It is in Kamala's interaction with Matha Shri that makes an old women named Chimini furious, as she says:

“Tis ill luck to talk so long with Matha Shri, wife of the pundit. You ought to forbid her you kunkun parties: have not the gods cursed her in that no son is born to her house? And she is half-witted: any woman would have *managed* things, or brought to her husband some pretty, young bride as co-wife; but she bewitches him, so that dare not marry another!” (*Love and Life Behind the Purdah* 63)

Sorabji presents through Chimini the true nature of many Indian women in society. Women who pass judgment based on the ideals of society and label others who do not have children as a superstition, thus making them an outcast of society. The key word Sorabji uses in the dialogue by the old woman is her use of the term “managed.” It is this term that a traditional Hindu wife should revolve around, this was certainly the notion. She must do everything possible to make sure her husband is happy and that he may have a son.

It is here that Matha Shri walks away from the party, although Kamala wants her to stay. Matha Shri feels that the old women was right, and that it would be best in the eyes of the gods if she were to leave. Matha Shri too believes she is bad luck, she pleads with her husband numerous times to get married but he has pledged that he would only marry once in the midst of a group of elders. Matha Shri knows who she wants her husband Nano to marry. It is the child

who they have raised like their own, her cousin's daughter, Sahai. The only problem Matha Shri faces is that because her husband loves her and he swore to only have one wife in front of the elders, he will not even consider another marriage. However, Matha Shri takes it upon herself to go off into the mountains into exile so that she can remove the problem, which is her existence:

“Ah! but yes! You villagers never come over the pass, or you must have heard the story. She was the wife of Nano the pundit, a good man and true. And strange it is, but it was in her very loss that he was blessed: for she was childless, and Nano (who had, you must know, some queer notion about one wife at a time!), thus released, married her cousin—a buxom lass. And now, behold, a sturdy son runneth about the courtyard, and jointed the village councils under the pipal tree.” (*Love and Life Behind the Purdah* 68)

The title of this chapter, “Greater Love,” foreshadows the theme of this story. It is her deep love for her husband with the pressures of society that make for such an ending. Society's deep criticism and scrutiny of Matha Shri's marriage causes her to succumb to the role of a Hindu wife and “manage” her duties, even if that means leaving her life with the man she loves. In the story's ending, Sahai and Nano have a son, and this is the “happy ending.” The narrative brings insight into the sacrifices many Hindu wives make in order to be presented in society with respect and dignity.

Through Sorabji's narratives the social practices that consume these characters only promote a life of suffering and sacrifice for the female characters. In her narrative it is superstition that has prompted such social practices. It is these superstitions that have given way to such cruel practices and ideals. Sorabji speaks of the restraints and traditions of a Hindu wife in her autobiography, and the tendencies of such a religion:

Of first importance in an orthodox Hindu Home are the Puja Ghar (House of Worship or Chapel) and the kitchen; each after its kind, serving the ritual of religion. In a lordly house every woman has her separate Puja-Gham...It is just—this worship of the Baby Krishna in these houses—the worship of a child by a mother, or by one who yearns to be a mother. (*India Calling* 57)

As Sorabji states, religion and wifely duties went hand-in-hand, praying often to the gods for children. A wife who could not bear children was considered an unfit wife. There was no value for a woman who did not have a child. A woman who bore a male child had the most significance in society. Little did they know that it was the sperm of a man that concluded which sex the women would conceive. The kitchen and the altar for a woman were the rooms of a Hindu wife. A kitchen to serve her family, and an altar to pray for her family. However, between praying and serving her family, she loses all identity. Her identity is given to her husband and her children; however, this concept of identity is left for society to use as a way to judge this human being. The women of Sorabji's stores have no identity, no significance, just traditions to abide by.

Sorabji often regarded to the Purdahdashins as “my Purdahdashins” (*India Calling* 203). Her dedication to helping these women and her studies in law allowed her to defend hundreds of cases for the Purdahdashins. As a young child, she watched her own mother helping many Purdahdashins which was instilled in Sorabji. Sorabji spent her career defending cases for the properties of the Purdahdashin women in the court:

I was ready to take any specific criminal work which might come my way, but I wanted to be able to help Purdahdashins in relations to their property and the disabilities connected with their status. (*India Calling* 52)

Some cases dealt with the betrayal of the “man-of-business” or the trusted family man who are supposed to help these women attain their properties, end up forging the papers and receiving the properties of the Purdahdashins. Since the Purdahdashins were unable to read and write they were often easily deceived.

On the other hand, a Purdahdashin could not be present in a court room that was filled with men, so on their behalf Sorabji was their voice. Sorabji surrendered her life to helping these women attain what was legally theirs. She defended cases that would have just merely been a lost cause. This was a subject of upmost importance to Sorabji, for she knew it was the right of a women to hold such property:

It is loosely said that Hindu women have no rights to property. This is not correct. Hindu women have absolute rights in the property known as stridden, i.e. property which descends in the female line, and is secure from the manipulation of males. They have also when childless what is called a “life interest”... (*India Calling* 67)

With her education in law, Sorabji had the tools to help these women, whom she felt much sadness for. In her *India Calling* (203), she writes about her stay in London and how she would receive many letters from the Purdahdashins seeking her help. Sorabji knew she was the only one who could help them and these cases were rather filled with complexity.

Purdahdashin women, being victims to the man-of-business, would often lose everything they once owned. They were indeed alone and needed a women who would fight for justice. Sorabji had a deep empathy for these women.

There was nothing for it but to pack up, and take the first boat out—the winter 1924. And it seemed to me that maybe it was my duty to sample work at the Calcutta Bar, so as to

make it easier for the women who would follow after. I therefore got enrolled in that High Court, and sailed forth, as before, from Headquarters at Calcutta at the call of my Purdahnashins. (*India Calling* 203)

It was as if they were somehow her own family. When they called she came. It would be one woman against many men and hundreds years of social customs in place, but she was ready to take it on.

“Behind the Purdah”

In her text *Love and life Behind the Purdah*, Sorabji composed a short story on the Purdahnashins titled “Behind the Purdah.” In this narrative there is an array of characters. The story unfolds with secrets and betrayals all behind the walls the Purdah women abide in. The story begins with a lady doctor from England named Miss Rebecca Yeastman, who is attending to the needs of an ill Purdahnashin woman. She is then taken through a series of hidden dark passages to a large room with little ventilation. She sees before her a group women sitting around on the floor, some in beautiful elaborate sarees, and others with their heads shaven. There a beautiful young woman lay who is feeling ill. The young Purdah women calls a translator, a Hindu man named Prabhu Das, the only man ever to enter the dwelling because he once saved the Raja’s (king) life. Through his translation for the young Purdah women, it is made known that she believes she had been poisoned by the old widow step-grandmother to her husband. However, the doctor said she is not poisoned and is just fine. The lady doctor later finds that there was indeed poison but it is such a small amount, that it is not enough to kill. Rebecca soon

finds out that the old woman was falsely accused by the young woman so that she may be banished from the home.

The story then turns as Rebecca writes a letter to her friend about the old woman who was falsely banished for poisoning her step-grandson's wife. Rebecca speaks about the old woman who now lives in a small home with other women, dressed in white and who awaits her death. The old widow woman whose step-grandson had taken all her property, is left with nothing. After some time he sends her fine garments as a way to reconcile and although she is no longer mad at him, she is fine where she is. The garment was poisoned, but luckily the old woman never wore it. Rebecca recalls watching the "little grey squirrels" run under the old woman's feet and how they would hide within her clothing. Rebecca shares her empathy for the old woman and wishes someone would help her. Rebecca understands that soon the old woman's destiny is to go to the holy waters of the Ganges and die there:

Her ejection from the palace must have been picturesque. It was intended that this howled be a final translation...Do you remember the old Thakurani and her pitiful story? I have just heard that a few months after I said good-bye to her she felt the death-call, and went on her pilgrimage...(*Love and Life Behind the Purdah* 80)

Sorabji uses this story as a way to show the struggles of being a widow, and the positions women place themselves in in their given home quarters. She shares a story filled with twists and turns that depicts the life of a widowed Purdahnashin. Within the walls where the Purdahnashins live there is tyranny amongst mothers, daughter-in-laws, and grandmothers. Sorabji depicts within this narrative the life of a widow who simply waits through life until it is her time to die. The old

woman's final months contradict her whole life which was behind a wall, and in the end she is set free to a pilgrimage to die under the sun.

The old woman with the squirrels running around her feet is based on a true account of a woman who Sorabji knew. In her autobiography she inserts the image of an old woman titled “The ‘Squirrel Lady’ in my Garden” and her story within the text (*India Calling* 68). The image is of an old woman in white drapes, covering her head while sitting in a garden. Although the plot of the story is fiction, there are many true facts from this woman’s life and the story. The “Squirrel-Lady” was the step-grandmother of a ruler. The woman had great wealth, and was loved by her husband who had passed away. Sorabji recalls not knowing exactly why the “Squirrel-Lady” was driven out but assumed maybe in was quarrels with the other women in the shared quarters. Sorabji recalls first meeting the old woman saying:

When I was taken to see her, my “Squirrel-Lady” was living in great poverty in a house which she built in the days of her prosperity (and rule— she was Senior Thakurani) ... She was driven out of her Palace, carrying with her only her few personal belongings, her clothes and her “stridhan” jewels (gifts from her parents upon marriage); what she minded most was that the memorials she had raised to her husband’s memory were deliberately desecrated. She had taken personal humiliation without a murmur. They would try to insult her husband; that would get to her! (*India Calling* 69)

Just like the story this widow was thrown out of her house with very little to call her own. When Sorabji asks “why do the squirrels love you so? the old woman replies, saying “Because, they know that I remember the time when I too was a squirrel, and played with them!” Sorabji recalls having an interview with the old woman’s step-grandson who had taken all her wealth and

property. He was an arrogant man and wanted to somehow in the words of Sorabji “cheer her up” by saying “ That’s not the worst thing I’ve done.” Adding that justice is “his will” because a ruler does what he wants. After the interview Sorabji is less impressed saying “I said a grave good-bye. I was not in a mood for sardonic humor: and I refused to see the ‘worse-than-that’ jewels” (70). After some time a letter comes from the step-grandson, Thakur Sahib. asking is his grandmother for reconciliation and just like in the story he sent her garments. In the letter saying:

“Why should we quarrel?” said the letter. “ Are you not my grandmother? Wear the garment I send, and come to see me in token that the past is forgiven. Your old quarters in the Palace are ready for you. (*India Calling* 71)

As Sorabji remembers, the old woman was advised by her waiting women to wait to see what Sorabji had to say on her return from England.

A smart woman, Sorabji had it tested at the Government Chemical Analyst. Sorabji states:

The report of the Chemical Analyst was that the garment sent for examination was poisoned; if worn next the body, the then wearer would have been poisoned through the pores of her skins— aa “classic” poison, a “classic” death, painful and slow... (*India Calling* 71)

This was the sad truth to the extent people would go to receive wealth. This woman was the inspiration for Sorabji’s story. Sorabji talks about meeting the woman one more time after her first pilgrimage, and how it was her English friend who took a picture of the old woman in the garden. Six months later on her last pilgrimage she passed away, and Sorabji remembers this incredible woman through the gray squirrels. The real story and the fictional story both come

down to the fact that widows were given a small role within society. Once one became a widow she would have to live a life of solitude. Sorabji dedicated her life to helping such widows who depended on their properties in order to have shelter.

Sorabji's life became the inspiration to her texts, the foundation to her beliefs. She was deeply involved in the lives of many helpless Indian women. Her real life stories became the stories of her books. She became the warrior for many women, fighting battles of injustice to save these women. To conclude with the words of Lord Hobhouse from his letter to Sorabji:

You, at any rate, are doing what you can to promote it—partly by holding up phases of Indian society to view, mainly by offering in your own person an instance of a lady competent to act as a “man-of-business” if only she can obtain the requisite position and the requisite recognition of her usefulness. And so you may prosper. (Letter from Hobhouse, October 1901)

From intertwining the cruel social practices into her texts, to creating a platform of awareness for Purdahdashin women, Sorabji represents the definition of a feminist. From attending a school with only men and creating a new world for women to study law in India, to acquiring the rightful land of the Purdahdashins and freeing the innocent, she was a hero. Her real life accounts and her stories share many connections, and allows readers to understand this incredible woman's journey for justice and equality.

Chapter Three:

Sarojini Naidu — “The Nationalist”

Sarojini Naidu was one of the leading political and social activists during the British Raj. She was also a poet, and her activism is evident in many of her writings. Growing up with a father who lived a life dedicated to education, he as Naidu claims had eyes that were “sternly scientific character.” He educated her to become a scientist or mathematician, but she knew at a very young age of the dreamer in her and the passion to write poetry. She has always regarded herself a dreamer, an instinct she felt she attained from her father and mother. Although her mother spoke to her in Hindustani in a mostly English speaking home, she recalls the beautiful lyrics her mother wrote in the language. As she began writing her poems she recalls:

From the day my “poetic career” began. At thirteen I wrote a long poem a “Lady of the Lake”—1300 lines in six days. At thirteen I wrote a drama of 2000 lines, a full-fledged passion thing that I began on the spur of the moment without forethought, just to spite my doctor who said I was very ill and must not touch a book. My health broke down permanently about this time, and my regular studies began stopped I read voraciously. I suppose the greater part of my reading was done between fourteen and sixteen. I wrote a novel, I wrote fat volumes of journals; I took myself seriously in those days. (*The Golden Threshold* 6)

The way to freeing these women from such social practices was through social reform and education. To Naidu education was the key to allowing women to gain their own independence and identity. It was such issues that Naidu shared in her speeches and poetry. She believed that along with achieving the nation's freedom, the nation must first solve the challenges that many

women were up against in India. Naidu spoke all throughout India on the subject of the nation's freedom along with the subject of female education. In a speech by Naidu she states:

What are you: because your fathers, in depriving your mothers of that immemorial birthright, have robbed you, their sons, of your just inheritance. Therefor I charge you, to restore to your women their ancient rights, for, as I have said, it is we, and not you, who are the real nation-builders, and without our active cooperation at all points of progress, all your Congresses and Conferences are in vain. Educate your women and the nation will take care of itself, for it is true today as it was yesterday and will be to the end of human life that the hand that rocks the cradle is the power that rules the world. (*Speeches and Writings of Sarojini Naidu* 13)

Naidu used her creative path of poetry and beliefs as a weapon against the restrictions of women. She contends that with the freedom of the nation's numerous women and education for them, then and only then will the nation become stronger. In this chapter, I will discuss Naidu's poetry from her text *The Golden Threshold* and how she used her poetry as a platform for the reform of Indian social practices that affected women. Through poetic analysis and the connection to her beliefs on women's natural born rights, one will be able to understand the true extent in which Naidu was one of the key members in the evolution of feminism in India. I will set forth on a journey to investigate the correlation between her poetic lyrics and the issues these women faced.

“The Pardah Nashin”

In her first text *The Golden Threshold*, one of three volumes that she published in 1904, she writes an array of poems that are based on a variety of subjects, but at the core of these

poems is her India. She uses the picturesque landscapes of India as a background for her poetic flow. Her poetry depicts the beauty of India, but also brings to light the various issues of the tormenting social practices on many of the women in India. One of Naidu's most famous pieces of poetry is called "The Pardah Nashin." In this poem the term Purdahnashin is written as Pardah Nashin. Naidu reflects on the social circumstances these women in Purdahs have had to face. This very practice of concealment from the outside world and men was found by many women, including Naidu, to be a restriction on women and a way of confinement. This was particularly an issue that Naidu protested against and felt a passionate opposition towards. In her lyrics she points out through imagery the hardships these women went through, and the utter loneliness that was captured within these women. In the first stanza Naidu writes:

Her life is a revolving dream
Of languid and sequestered ease;
Her girdles and her fillets gleam
Like changing fires on sunset seas;
Her raiment is like morning mist,
Shot opal, gold and amethyst. (lines 1-6)

Naidu pictures for the readers the relaxed nature of life for the Harem women. Harem was a specific area of a house that was designed only for women, that included wives, servants, and concubines. But the life depicted in this poem is that of the wives. These women live a life a luxury with materialistic objects all around them. With "girdles" (undergarment around the waist) or "fillets" (hair ribbons) that "gleam" because of its lusciousness and expense, they are

surrounded by beauty.. The women's clothing is like the “morning mist,” soft and shiny, with precious stones and jewels all around. In the next stanza, the tone is continued:

From thieving light of eyes impure,
From coveting sun or wind's caress,
Her days are guarded and secure
Behind her carven lattices,
Like jewels in a turbaned crest,
Like secrets in a lover's breast. (lines 7-12)

Naidu shares the hidden world in which these women lived. These women who were protected from all the worldly things such as the natural occurring weather, and the attention of others. It is suggested that she is protected behind her purdah of “carven lattices.” Naidu uses the examples of “jewels in a turbaned crest” and “secrets in a lover's breast” as images to imply the hiddenness of these women behind closed doors and veils. The first two stanzas picture a life of eternal bliss, materialistic goods, and safety. A life that is most desirable amongst women, since it adheres to one of peace and luxury. However, in the third stanza the tone drastically changes:

But though no hand unsanctioned dares
Unveil the mysteries of her grace,
Time lifts the curtain unawares,
An her sorrow looks into her face...
Who shall prevent the subtle years,
Or shield a women's eyes from tears? (lines 13-18)

Naidu presents to the reader an opposition of emotion in the third stanza. Suddenly the poem is filled with a tone of loneliness and sadness. Here the women are so hidden that their “graces” or beauty are simply a mystery to the outside world. Being closed off from the world and secluded into a life of loneliness creates the women of Naidu’s poem. Although her life is filled with the luxuries people pursue, under the purdah is a sad woman. Women behind the veil have been conditioned for centuries to hide and never to speak out. It is this very practice that hindered women to even conceptualize the idea that men and women are equal. With social conditioning and a lack of education, this life style has been doomed for these women. To understand one’s capabilities and beliefs, one must understand her own individualistic power. This poem, which starts with images of beauty and peace within the lives of these women, contradicts these images with what they are actually feeling on the inside. The images of sadness outshine the images of beauty. In this poem, Naidu uses her poetic genius as license to underline what social practices have done to women. Naidu creates a voice for the women behind the veils, shedding light on the deeper issues of this constricting tradition.

Purdah, which was a custom for Hindu and Muslim women, was a social restriction on women against expressing themselves and being independent individuals of society. In a text titled *The Emergence of Feminism in India*, Padma Anagol quotes the words of Soonderbai Powar, who was a social reformist on the subject of Hindu womanhood:

She described Indian women as “slaves” who had been forced to merge their personal freedom and individuality in the personality of man. Through an acute observation of Hindu mannerisms, such as the negative expressions used on the birth of a female child and the ribald popular sayings about wives and widows, she demonstrates how a

women is devalued, making it impossible for her to be an inspiring companion to her husband or a wise and responsible mother to her children...Dissecting the hindu customs of early marriage, female infanticide,, the seclusion of women, the dedication of girls as temple prostitutes and the dowry system, which she collectively described as the “bitter fruits of Hinduism.” (*The Emergence of Feminism in India* 32)

Clearly it is seen that for centuries women have received the brunt of such customs, and the toll it has taken on the livelihood of female generations within India.

“Caprice”

It was the insecurities of men that placed women in a position of zero power, giving up their full freedom in the hands of their husbands. Rather than having an intellectual companion, what is left is an oppressed women with responsibilities of child-bearing and care of her husband. She is asked to hide her individual personality and adapt to one that merely listens through demands, unable to truly live life but simple live through it. This social condition is captured remarkably in a poem from Naidu’s second volume of the three volume collection, titled *The Broken Wing; Songs of Love, Death and Destiny, 1915-1916*. This was during the time Naidu submerged herself into the political realm for national concern for freedom from the British. Although her attention was on the nation’s freedom, she very much held to the same account the attention on the marginalized women within the nation. The poem from her second text is called “Caprice.” This poem, made up of two stanzas, below is the first stanza, makes its point with a plot twist:

You held a wild-flower in your finger-tips,

Idly you pressed it to indifferent lips,
Idly you tore its crimson leaves apart...

Alas! it was my heart. (lines 1-4)

In the first stanza, Naidu uses the image of a “wild-flower” implying the softness of a flower to that of a woman. In addition, the term “wild” expresses the free-spirit within every woman. To sustain a flower it must be treated with good care. This symbolizes the needs of a woman that should be cared for by her husband in order to grow in love and in life. The term “idly” points out the insignificance the husband feels towards his wife. The flower that symbolizes the woman is neglected by her husband, thus Naidu’s choices of words “indifferent lips.” In the last two lines, it is evident that the leaves that were torn apart symbolize her broken heart. She uses terms like “crimson” to paint the vivid reddish-purple color of the tearing. When a leaf is torn from a flower it does not shed this color but the color is used to associate with the heart. The term “alas” shares the grief and exclamation of the moment that the leaf is torn apart, or otherwise seen as her heart being broken.

You held a wine-cup in your finger-tips,
Lightly you raised it to indifferent lips,
Lightly you drank and flung away the bowl...

Alas! it was my soul. (lines 5-8)

In the second stanza, Naidu draws on the image of a “wine-cup” symbolizing a woman again with an object that is also delicate. This time Naidu uses the words “lightly” instead of “idly” to build on the already broken woman. The woman is once again objectified, as the line “drank and flung away the bowl” implies that she was used and once again neglected and uncared for. The

term “drank” symbolizing the use of her body for sex and then “flung away the bowl” having no other use with her anymore. Again she uses the word “alas” but this time it is her soul that he has been broken. Naidu uses the image of objects like “wild-flower” and wine-cup,” to draw on the idea that women are treated like objects. Using subjectivity like “I” and “me” gives the character a personal emotion, and direct projection of the speaker’s emotions.

The two stanzas correlate through their use of repetition and imagery. Naidu uses the heart and soul as two separate components of the body. First the heart is broken but what remains is the soul. However, when the soul is broken all that remains is the body. The body for which her husband finds the only use for. This poem symbolizes the devaluing nature of many men on the traditional household wife and mother. Without caring for the heart, and soul (that encompasses the mind within), there is only a body. Through the social restrictions on women it becomes that women are nothing but a bodily machine for pleasure and reproduction. Naidu presents this poem as symbolizing the treatment of men towards women. One may even note her change from “wild-flower” to “wine-cup” as a way to show the transition from youth to womanhood. Girls marry when they are young with a free-spirit and a full heart to love, then as she ages she is guarded just like the aged wine in a shielded cup. Naidu takes the underlining issues, and compacts them into short poems of intensity and power.

“Dirge”

The evils of social practices are prominent throughout Naidu's collection of texts. She address the purdah, the rejection and hostile environment in which men treated women, and in a poem called “Dirge” (1904), she shares the inevitable destiny of a young windowed Hindu

women. This poem is from her third and final volume of her collection, called *The Bird of Time: Songs of Life, Death and Time*. The first stanza reads:

What longer need hath she of loveliness
Whom Death has parted from her lord's caress?
Of glimmering robes like rainbow- tangled mist,
Of gleaming glass or jewels on her wrist,
Blossoms or fillet-pearls to deck her head,
or jasmine garlands to adorn her bed? (lines 1-6)

The poet starts the lines with question that society proclaims on widows, which is: why should she need to uphold her beauty and youth when her husband is dead? Naidu presents death with a capital D, portraying the animate being which death is in this poem. The following four lines depict the images that of an ideal Indian bride who is adorned in colorful clothing, jewelry, flowers, and a ribbon of pearls on her head. Naidu uses the voice of society to ask the questions of why a women should continue to dress like a bride. The images of the jasmine garland is of importance to signify the symbolism of a new bride. Jasmine flowers, which are made up of white petals and have an enticing scent, are strung on thread creating long garlands of flowers. This is used in the decoration of newly married couples bed on their "first night" (a term used in India as a marking of the first night as a married couple and a signal to consummate or have sex).

Put by the mirror of her bridal joys...
Why needs she now its counsel of praise,
Or happy symbol of the henna leaf
Forehands that know the comradeship of grief,

Red spices for her lips that drink of sighs,

Or black collyrium for her weeping eye? (lines 7-12)

Though she looks into the mirror that she once used to get dressed as a bride, it is no longer needed since she is being stripped of any form of beauty. Hindu women used henna, which is a dye created from plants, as intricate artwork on the arms and hands during ceremonial and festive times like marriage. In this poem the poet, speaking as society as a whole, asks why does one need this henna that symbolizes happiness, when she now only knows sadness. The term “red spices” is the mashup of spices to create a red colored lipstick. Society does not think a woman should wear this when she is utterly sad, or even the “black collyrium” which is eyeliner made from plants. These two stanzas offer the justification society uses in order to go forth with these social customs. According to the tradition-ridden society, a widow does not need to wear bright colored saris (a long piece of clothing that is dropped around the body), jewels on her wrist or hair, jasmine flowers in her bedroom, henna on her hands, or any use of makeup to adorn the eyes or lips. In her sadness she must submit herself to a life of solitude and remembrance of her husband.

In the next stanza, the imagery of the rituals of marriage continues as it is used to convey the breaking of the symbolic bond:

Shatter her shining bracelets, break the string

Threading the mystic marriage-beads that cling

Loth to desert a sobbing throat so sweet,

Unbind the golden anklets on her feet,

Divest her of her azure veils and cloud

Her living beauty in a living shroud. (lines 13-18)

This stanza embodies the ritualistic acts of an Indian marriage. The voice is the continuation of society. In India, a bride wears bracelets that she wears from the day she is married. In the Hindu religion this is broken as a sign of being a widow. The “mystic-marriage beads” represent the mangla-sutra (a traditional necklace made with black and gold beads), which is another significant symbol of the marriage ritual. The poet uses the terms “shatter” and “break” to depict the cruelty in which this is done to the woman. One can imagine the “sobbing” of this woman as she is being stripped down of any ties with her husband and society. Like the bracelets, and the marriage beads, the golden anklet too is a symbol of marriage which is also taken off. Her veil is then replaced by a shroud to cover her body. The stanza shares the intensity of the society’s urgency in the reversal of marriage.

In the following stanza, the speaker defends the poor girl from the such cruel customs, asking society what sense does these practices make:

Nay, let her be!...what comfort can we give

For joy so frail, for hope so fugitive?

The yearning pay of unfulfilled delight,

The moonless vigils of her lonely night,

For the abysmal anguish of her tears,

And flowering springs that mock her empty years? (lines 19-24)

Naidu uses her voice as a protest against these devaluing traditions on women. A widow is forever stripped of any social status, and of any dreams of having a life of happiness. This woman is cast out into society, unable to live a life of happiness, but simply exists as a relic for

the memory of her husband. A young widow who for the rest of her life is tormented by loneliness. Naidu starts the poem with what the social conventions are for a widow, and what society uses to justify such an such cruel customs that torment widow and leave them to a life of loneliness. Through the images of the rituals, one is able to understand the extent to which women were devalued in society. Naidu uses her poetic lyrics to question this evil age-old tradition of stripping widowed women of all marriage and societal bonds. A young or old woman who was a widow would have her destiny chosen for her and live a life of solitude. Naidu asks society, what do you get out doing such rituals? Does it “comfort” one to know a woman can no longer live as a being in society as soon as her husband is dead? The freedom that a woman gives up to her husband upon marriage is then taken with him to death, leaving her with a life of what society allows.

“Indian Gypsy”

On the other hand, Naidu shares the epitome of everything she wants for all women, which is embodied in a poem titled “Indian Gypsy.” Directly from the title one can understand the concept of freedom that is foreshadowed through the title word gypsy. This poem is entirely opposite of all the poems listed above: poems that suggest topics of oppression, being hidden and devalued. Naidu starts the poem with a series of images:

In tattered robes that hoard a glittering trace,
Of bygone colors, bordered to the knee,
Behold her, daughter of a wandering race,
Tameless, with the bold falcons agile grace,

And the lithe tiger's majesty. (lines 1-5)

The woman in the poem does not fit societies conventions of how a woman should carry herself. In the first line of the poem, she wears "tattered robes"; she is able to wear what ever she wants even if it is old and torn. Again Naidu's conscious use of words implies that by being able to pick one's own wardrobe it promotes one's freedom. She wears a robe "bordered to her knees," a concept that is unimaginable for a Indian women. In Indian society, to show one's skin is frowned upon and a restriction for women. A woman is taught to be modest and covered up, just like the Purdahnashins who hide themselves from the world. Here, this woman is free of any customs and is able to bare her knees. There is no one that can tell her she cannot, because she is not part of a society that structures the way one should live life. She creates her own structure and that is based on what makes her feel alive and happy. Naidu uses the term "tameless," which is of much relevance and importance, because of the constant control of the women in the Indian society. A social condition to tame women to become mere objects rather than intellectual beings, just like that "wild-flower" in Naidu's "Caprice" poem. Naidu compares this Indian gypsy to a falcon who moves swiftly and is brave. Words like "bold" and "agile" represent two characteristics that are least likely to be used in describing a traditional Indian woman. In addition, sharing the likeness of a tiger's majesty to that of this gypsy woman creates an strong feline presence within her. This description of the Indian gypsy is the very definition that Naidu wants to represent women.

The speaker continues this theme of freedom with images of animals and wild life for the reader to understand the freedom humans should also have, and the happiness that comes from being free from man-made customs, stating:

With frugal skill her simple wants she tends,
She folds her tawny heifers and her sheep
Unlovely meadows when the daylight ends,
Ere the quick night upon her flock descends

Like a black panther from the caves of sleep. (lines 6-10)

In this stanza, the gypsy is free to do as she pleases. She is able to care for herself and her sheep. She has no responsibilities to others or society but only to the sheep she roams around with. Like her flock she too grazes the open lands and roams freely for sustainability. With her “frugal skills” she is able to live life attending to her essential bodily needs of hunger and thirst.

In the next stanza, the speaker introduces time, and change, which is often a fear within people of societies that are filled with schedules and order. This gypsy does not sense those things others fear but lives to to her own beat, as the speaker writes:

Time’s river winds in foaming centuries
Its changing, swift, irrevocable course
To far off and incalculable seas;
She is twin-born with primal mysteries,
And drinks of life at Time’s forgotten source. (lines 11-15)

One can understand the concept of time and its effect on the gypsy, which is of no effect. For she does what she wants and when she wants, utterly living life to the fullest. She does not live by social conventions or earthly time but by her own free will. She has encompassed freedom at its fullness, and is liberated from man-made structures. Time, which is “swift” and has an “irrevocable course,” does not impact the life of this gypsy. It is simple, a concept unknown to

her. Time, which is the basis in which the traditional woman works around, is the very concept that prevents the woman to live life. The Indian gypsy with “primal mysteries” or essential ways to sustain her life surrenders her soul to her life’s journey entirely. The gypsy roams without social structure and becomes the free-spirited woman that grows through life experiences and its wonders. Naidu portrays through this Indian gypsy a life without social conditioning or structures, and through the gypsy she shares the beauty of a woman who is left to roam freely at her own will. She who is not bounded to any man, society, or worldly notions, but only to herself.

In essence, Naidu used poetry as a vessel to convey her deep beliefs on the social practices that many Indian women faced. In addition to taking action for women’s equality and speaking in public, her texts allowed her to express herself in a creative direction. Naidu’s poetry has brought social awareness to such issues that often were hidden within society itself. Naidu, being the youngest of the three women, lived in a time to see India attain freedom and lived in this new age that Saththianadhan talked so highly about. With the use of imagery within the poetic lyrics, one can conceptualize her thoughts and comprehend the extent to which such practices needed reform. At the center of Naidu’s beliefs was the importance of education amongst India’s women. In a speech delivered at the Indian Social Conference in December of 1906 Calcutta, Naidu addresses the issues of more education for the females of India, and how the nation can only attain freedom when all of its citizens are free:

It seems to me a paradox, at once touched with humor and tragedy, that on the very threshold of the twentieth century, it should still be necessary for us to stand upon public platforms and pass resolutions in favor of what is called female education in India...But

as by some irony of evolution the paradox stands to our shame, it is time for us to consider how best we can remove such a reproach, how we can best achieve something more fruitful than the passing of empty resolutions in favor of female education year to year. At this great moment of stress and striving, when the Indian races are seeking for the ultimate unity of a common national ideal, it is well for us to remember that the success of the whole movement lies centered in what is known as the women question.

(Speeches and Writings of Sarojini Naidu 11)

Naidu used various routes to emphasize the great necessity for female education in India. She expressed this not only through her own works, but also throughout her career as a politician.

Naidu shares the constant struggle to renew more education for the female population, and that without freedom for women there can not be freedom for a nation. What brings all these women together is their constant fight for the natural for rights of women, and their belief that education was the key to set these women free.

Chapter Four:

The Three Pillars of the Evolution of Feminism

In conclusion, Krupabai Sathianadhan, Cornelia Sorabji, and Sarojini Naidu became the pillars for the evolution of feminism during the colonial period in their dedication in helping the marginalized women of India. Although all three had separate careers and were from separate backgrounds in India, they all believed in the same ideal: the belief that the treatment of many women subjected to social practices needed reform, and female education was necessary in the reform. Sathianadhan, Sorabji, and Naidu became the aid for women who felt oppressed within society, often symbolically and literally becoming the voice for these women. They were truly women of ambition on a mission, a mission to rewrite history for the future of India's women. Naidu, who was on the forefront in protesting against the British for the nation's freedom, also held to the same extent the protest against social practices and brought awareness for the rights of women to be educated. She concluded that without the freedom of India's women that India would never be free. Sorabji used her intellect and training as a lawyer to speak up for and present cases in order to attain justice for the Purdahnashin women, also addressing issues such as child-marriage and aiding young mothers and children. Sathianadhan depicted the oppressed Hindu women in her novel, becoming the first Indian woman to write an English novel with a female protagonist. In addition, Sathianadhan used her theories to make others understand the injustice between the dynamic of a man and woman in India. Sathianadhan, Sorabji, and Naidu all used texts to convey their beliefs and as a way of protest. Although these women were very similar in their beliefs they were also very different in how they conducted their mission.

Naidu used poetry as a way to express her feelings on the crisis of women enduring such practices. She uses metaphors, similes, and imagery to paint a story of hardships. Each section of a poem is rich in diction, and encompasses a poetic rhythm. She uses her life experiences and the horrendous practices within India's society, and merges them into tales of beauty and sadness. Her words carry importance and images that allow for readers to obtain a deeper understanding of the issues at hand. Symbolism is bound within her words and implies her deep concern with the future of the girls of India.

Sorabji used the way of narratives to speak her beliefs, as well as her autobiography as a living proof to guide the narratives. In every narrative there is truth within the themes of the stories. She uses narratives to convey understanding and the importance of social reform, the reasons why change must be made. Each narrative embodies a specific purpose, not for the sake of a short story, but as a written protest against the realities of that time.

Sattianadhan used the way of novels to tell a story on the effects of such social practices in India, and also guides her arguments with an autobiography written as novel. Sattianadhan uses the disguise of the character Saguna to profess her beliefs and share her life experiences. Her stories share the effects of the colonial period and British schooling, as well as the age old traditions within India's history. She compares and contrasts the old traditions with the "new age," a term she associates Christianity with, a time of conversion in the nineteenth century. In her texts she shares the deep isolation of India's women who are degraded by customs, and through her stories she makes known to readers the dire need for social reform.

Sattianadhan, Sorabji, and Naidu all broke the boundaries pre-destined for them and set a new path for women in attempts for a life of happiness and freedom. In Sorabji's *India Calling*,

she recalls having the scholarship to study abroad taken away from her merely because she was a woman:

In spite, however, of the University Constitution declaring that women were as men. I was not allowed to hold my scholarship. The test had been the same, and all conditions were fulfilled; but the Authorities said, "No!" —It was in fact impertinent of any woman to produce circumstances which were not in the mind of the Authorities as a possibility when they dangled a gilded prize before eyes that should have been male eyes alone!

(India Calling 24)

In this passage Sorabji depicts the obstacles women faced during the colonial period. How the idea of a woman becoming a possible candidate to achieve a scholarship was not even in the thought process of these overseers. As she says it "should have been male eyes alone"; this was the barrier these three women crossed. They all lived in places within India that allowed only men to pursue careers and education, but this did not stop these women from receiving an education that as a result they would use as a tool to aid others.

It is superstitions in the name of religion and culture that have allowed societies to justify such practices. These traditions that mock the nature of a woman, and instill at a young age the torment of being born as one. Sathianadhan, Sorabji, and Naidu used their written texts as their form of rebellion. It was through their texts and actions that they brought awareness to the mistreatment of the nation's marginalized women. Sathianadhan, Sorabji, and Naidu, all though born and brought up in British schooling, still kept to their roots even when writing in English. The stories and poems of these women all contained the landscapes of India's beautiful mountains, hills, trees, and its animals. One can infer that for all three women India was home.

One particular feature of their texts is the use of Indian terms within the clutter of English words as a way to connect back to the beauty of India's languages, and to clarify meaning in a way only a native would understand. This was something that was new to this time period, a period where the novel was introduced: the colonial period, a time where English was written by Indian writers, and thus new ways of writing began to form. It is through such reformists that the country today has been changed. Sathianadhan, Sorabji, and Naidu all believed that education was the vessel to emancipate a woman from social customs. Although there is still much to be done as far as women's rights in India, the nation has come a long way from where it once was through the aid of such brave women.

Bibliography

- Bayly, Susan. "The Evolution of Colonial Cultures: Nineteenth-Century Asia." *The Oxford History of the British Empire: The Nineteenth Century*. Comp. A. N. Porter. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999. N. Print.
- Gooptu, Suparna. *Cornelia Sorabji: India's Pioneer Woman Lawyer*. New Delhi: Oxford UP, 2006. Print.
- Mehrotra, Arvind Krishna. *A History of Indian Literature in English*. New York: Columbia UP, 2003. Print.
- Naidu, Sarojini. *Sarojini Naidu: An Introduction to Her Life, Work and Poetry*. Ed. Vishwanath S. Naravane. Hyderabad: Orient Longman, 1996. Print.
- "Religious Intelligence." *The Christian Advocate*. Vol. 4. N.p.: 1826, n.d. N. Web.
- Said, Edward W. *Culture and Imperialism*. New York: Knopf, 1993. Print.
- Sinha, Mrinalini. "Mother India: Empire, Nation, and the Female Voice." *Journal of Women's History* 6.2 (1994): 6-44. Web.
- Midgley, Clare, ed. *Gender and Imperialism*. Manchester: Manchester UP, 1998. Print.
- "Female Education." *Journal of the National Indian Association in Aid of the Social Progress and Education in India* [London] Jan. 1885: n. pag. Google Books. Web.
- Satthianadhan, Krupabai. *Kamala: The Story of a Hindu Child-Wife*. Ed. Chandani Lokugé. New Delhi: Oxford UP, 2002. Print.
- Subramaniam, Mangala. *The Power of Women's Organizing: Gender, Caste, and Class in India*. Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2006. Print.

Joshi, Priya. *In Another Country: Colonialism, Culture, and the English Novel in India*. New York: Columbia UP, 2002. Print.

Sorabji, Cornelia. *India Calling: The Memories of Cornelia Sorabji, India's First Woman Barrister*. Ed. Chandani Lokugé. New Delhi: Oxford UP, 2001. Print.

Sorabji, Cornelia. *Love and Life behind the Purdah*. Ed. Chandani Lokugé. New Delhi: Oxford UP, 2003. Print.

Goodyear, Sara Suleri. *The Rhetoric of English India*. Chicago: U of Chicago, 1992. Print.

Anagol, Padma. *The Emergence of Feminism in India, 1850-1920*. Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2005. Print.

Naidu, Sarojini, and Arthur Symons. *The Golden Threshold*. New York: John Lane, 1916. Print.

Naidu, Sarojini, and Edmund Gosse. *The Bird of Time; Songs of Life, Death & the Spring*. New York: John Lane, 1912. Print.

Naidu, Sarojini. *The Broken Wing; Songs of Love, Death & Destiny, 1915-1916*. New York: John Lane, 1917. Print.