

CHAPTER X.

WOMEN'S EDUCATION.

1. Women's Education has always figured prominently in the progressive development of Mysore. Every official document on education, for over half a century, has devoted a special chapter to it. Sir K. Seshadri Iyer, the Dewan of Mysore, in his address to the Representative Assembly in 1886 declared that one of the chief objects of educational policy of the time was "to elevate and extend women's education, and to conduct it on a system strictly national so as to enlist popular sympathy in its progress". This policy has resulted in the rapid educational progress of women, considering the initial conservatism which characterised the attitude of the public. The proportion of boys and girls under instruction was 100 : 20 thirty years ago, and to-day it is 100 : 43. The ideal ratio would be 100 : 100. It is a long way to the ideal, but the progress has not been disappointing.

2. The quantitative expansion has been great, but the work in the girls' schools has closely followed the pattern of boys' schools with the result that it has given room to the complaint that the education imparted is not suited to the needs of the great majority of girls who settle down as wives and mothers and that, it is out of tune with their natural environment. But it is interesting to note that in the early stages, the idea of differentiated courses of studies for girls was opposed by the leaders of the women's movement themselves. They viewed with suspicion any proposal for change, as putting a stamp of inferiority on them. But as it was observed, in course of time, that the existing system touched only the higher and the upper middle classes, the opinion of women began to express itself in favour of a course which would be more practical and less academic and which would be particularly suited to the aptitudes and interests of the average girls.

3. We invited a representative body of ladies who had long experience in the field of women's education, to give

us their views. They were of the opinion that the education which the women were getting was one fundamentally suited to men. The object of women's education should be, as stated by one of them, (and this was the general view also) to enable a woman to earn a living, and in case she married to enable her to run a family; and afterwards to lead a useful life for the rest of her lifetime. She should study in an atmosphere which does not develop masculine tendencies or an inferiority complex.

4. We have, in our recommendations, taken note of these views.

5. An important problem in the education of women is that of co-education. In the Primary stage, the interests and natural activities of girls are the same as those of boys. Properly speaking, they are not to be looked upon as boys and girls, but as children. We have, therefore, recommended that the Primary Schools should be co-educational, and that the curriculum should be a common one. We have recommended that women teachers should be employed in these schools to the full extent they are available. Teaching children is a sphere of national activity in which women can play an increasingly larger part and this recommendation has been made with the object of giving women full opportunities for employment in vocations for which they are eminently well suited.

6. We are of the opinion that at the secondary stage, which is the period of adolescence for both boys and girls, girls should have separate institutions. At the secondary stage, girls join a separate girls' school in large numbers if one is available nearby, but if one is not available, only a few of them join a boys' school and that as a last resort. Even in these latter schools the girls move in separate groups from boys and as such, they do not participate in the life of the school in all its fullness.

7. We have recommended a High School curriculum which includes subjects which, we think, are particularly suited to girls, such as Domestic Arts, Music, Dancing, Nursing, etc. We have also included subjects which could well be taken by girls as well as by boys, such as Typewriting, Tailoring, etc. We recommend that

these subjects should be extensively provided in all girls' schools. We do not intend, however, that girls should be compelled to take only particular subjects. Our idea is that there should be provision of subjects suitable to them, but there should be no compulsion. But we naturally expect that girls will take those subjects which suit them, rather than those which do not. We recommend that in boys' schools where a large number of girls are studying, women teachers should be employed in a fair proportion.

8. We have recommended that facilities for Technical Education should be made available to women, and that special facilities should be given to them in the field of social service, such as Nursing. We have recommended that the Vocational Institute for Women at Mysore should be improved and up-graded and that it should be of the polytechnic type. Recognising the need for the technical education of women in those branches which suit them, we have recommended that representatives of women should be on the proposed Council of Technical Education. In the case of the proposed Board of High School and Intermediate Education we have recommended that the composition of the Board should reflect functional interests. We have not specified its composition but we recommend that representatives of women should be included in this Board.

9. As we go higher up to the University separate institutions for women become less necessary. Courses like the Honours courses cannot obviously be duplicated for girls. While we consider that separate institutions for girls are unnecessary at the university stage, we are not averse to separate institutions being established if the number of girls is sufficiently large to warrant an independent institution, especially when special courses like Domestic Science and Fine Arts are to be provided.

10. Special attention should be devoted to extra-curricular activities for girls. We have recommended the expansion of the Bharat Seva Dal which includes the Women's Wing to the expansion of which particular attention should be given. We have recommended a similar expansion of the Girl Guide Organization. Seeing that women played a great part in the auxiliary services

during the last World War, we have proposed that a Girls' Wing of the National Cadet Corps should be established. There should be a qualified Physical Culture Instructress on the staff of each big-sized Girls' High School.

10. In our opinion, the needs of Girls' Education require women on the Inspectorate of the Department of Education and accordingly we recommend that immediate steps should be taken to appoint suitable District Educational Officers from among experienced and qualified Head Mistresses. Incidentally, this would result in a greater number of women getting into the higher grades.

11. A few representatives of the Women's Conference in Mysore have urged—and we fully share this view—that it is necessary for Government to continue the existing fee concessions extended to girls in the several grades of education for some more years, if the pace of progress of Women's Education has to be quickened.
