

Negotiating Gender, Class and Nation: *The Indian Ladies Magazine* and the discourse of women's emancipation in Colonial India

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ABSTRACT

*The Indian Ladies Magazine*¹ was one of the most important women's magazine in colonial India. Its stated purpose was to create a discursive platform for the discussion of women's issues in India and abroad. It counted among its contributors authors of eminence like Sarojini Naidu and Rokheya Shakhawat Hussain. However, it was also a magazine whose access was limited to highly educated men and women. The magazine also tried to create a dialogue between British women and the "natives" and create a discussion on common womanhood. It was a magazine edited by a Christian woman and hence it had a perspective of its own.

In this paper, I would try to explore the questions of how the discourse of women's emancipation was based on sometimes subtle and otherwise overt patriarchal conceptualizations. I would also try to explore the questions of race and class and how it was limiting on the discussion of emancipation of women. By a comparative perspective using examples of other magazines (mainly *Stree Darpan*), I would try to show how the question of nation though visibly absent but yet it lurked in the background. It was not a magazine like the plethora of women's magazines that emerged as a part of national regeneration. There was a clear and visible tension in negotiating class and race while discussing the issues of women. The magazine also dealt in an interesting way questions of caste and other social categories. Finally, it would be equally worthwhile to dwell on the kind of politics the magazine indulged in, consciously or unconsciously.

Introduction

Women's magazine has been a focus of interest for quite some time now. British India saw the emergence of women's magazines all across the country. Many of the women's magazines were edited by women themselves; some were edited by men as well.¹ The magazines were a part of a print culture that developed out of colonial modernity. The social space of magazines was restricted to the literate, to those who can read and write and hence take part in the discussions. Though small in number, women became an important section of reader and consumers of print.² Magazines hence also shaped the culture of discussion among women. As Gail Minault argues in the case of twentieth-century Urdu women's magazines that despite some limitations of ideology and access, the magazines "at least gave women a place where their voices could be heard".³ In the case of Hindi journals too, Orsini says that they were at the forefront of debates and initiatives seeking to

emancipate women from negative images and discriminatory practices, and radically to change women's lives.⁴

In this paper, I would be focusing on a women's magazine called *The Indian Ladies Magazine*⁵ that was published from Madras. The *Indian Ladies Magazine* was edited by a Christian woman called Kamala Sathianathan written in English. It was a highly respectable magazine where figures like Annie Beasant and Sarojini Naidu wrote. Therefore, the perspective of this magazine is different from the magazines that have been mentioned above. It was a magazine that gave space to the English, Anglo-Indian and the "native" ladies, as the Indian educated women are referred. Therefore, its perspective though reformatory often transcended the national boundary. It was of course limited by its access to the educated women. There are many tensions in the magazine too around the issue of race and gender itself. I would be focusing on the unconventional narratives that women are building of themselves here and pointing to the limited nature of emancipation that they espoused. As a reference and point of comparison, I would be using certain other magazine, mainly the "*Stree Darpan*", another women's magazine published from north Indian town of Allahabad. The question of nation, race and gender hence also becomes important in the context of colonial modernity. Before

¹*The Indian Ladies Magazine* ran in print from 1900 to 1918 and then again restarted from 1927-31, Nehru Memorial and Museum Library (NMML), New Delhi. It was edited by Kamala Sathianathan who was a Telegu and was committed to education. Mahaboob Basha "Casting Women in Men's Mould: Men editing women's journals in Andhra, 1883-1907

²Mytheli Sreenivas "Emotion, Identity and the Female Subject: Tamil Women's Magazines in Colonial India, 1890-1940 *Journal of Women's History*, Volume 14, Number 4, Winter 2003, pp.59-82

³Gail Minault, "Urdu Women's Magazines in the Early Twentieth Century," *Manushi*, no. 48 (September-October 1988): 2-9, quotation on 9.

⁴Francesca Orsini "Domesticity and Beyond : Hindi Women's Journals in the Early Twentieth Century " *South Asia Research* 1999 19:37

⁵*The Indian Ladies Magazine* ran in print from 1900 to 1918 and then again restarted from 1927-31, Nehru Memorial and Museum Library(NMML), New Delhi

embarking on that, a word on the editor, Kamala Sathianathan would be in order.

Kamala Sathianathan

Kamala Krishnamma Sathianathan was a Telugu, who was committed to education. In 1898, she published her first book, a collection of short stories. Soon afterwards she became the first Indian woman to do her M.A. She then started India's first women's magazine, the *Indian Ladies' Magazine*. Kamala travelled to England when one of her sons was to study there. After she returned to India, she was made a Member for the Madras Senate and later member of the Andhra University Senate. She served as an honorary magistrate, was on the Central Advisory Education Board, started a child welfare and maternity centre at Tinnevely, a Ladies Cooperative Society in Anantpur and nine cush in Madras, revived the Child Welfare Centre at Dindigul, the Red Cross Society at Coconada, and inaugurated the YMCA and Ladies Club at Cannanore. She took to heart Mahatma Gandhi's precepts about the Harijans, and invited both high and low castes to her home together. The in the 1941 New Year Honours, Kamala received a Coronated Medal and later an MBE.

Kamal started the *Indian Ladies Magazine*. She wrote articles for the *Indian Ladies Magazine* which she edited (1901-1913, 1918, 1919, 1927-1934). She also seems to have written for children (*Detective Janaki* etc.). The Magazine helped the cause of women, propagated the work for social reform and introduced new ideas. Article writers included Mrs. Annie Besant, Lady Harnam Singh, Pandita Ramabai, Cornelia Sorabju and Sarojini Naidu.

Women and the Indian Ladies Magazine

The *Indian Ladies Magazine* was one of the most comprehensive literary and political magazines of the Colonial India. It discussed national and International issues that concerned women. The writers mostly comprised the elite sections of Indian society, the Anglo-Indian and the British men and women. They had taken the task of advocating reforms on the issue of women and gender. However, it needs to be pointed out here at the outset that like other magazines it was full of contradictions when it came to the voices of people speaking. Often, the articles in the magazines are pure speculation based on pseudo-scientific ideas. For instance, a Malayam girl is described as:

"sweet and sprightly creature. Her beauty and winsomeness have won universal admiration. Ethnologists give the malayalees a Dravidian origin but there is nothing in the malayalee girl's features to confirm the theory. She is of a perfectly Aryan cut and looks fine and beautiful.

Generally Malayalee girls have fair complexion. Their dress (originally shamefully sparse, but considerably improved now) is pure and snow-white. There is nothing like

spotless white to set off to advantage the person of a good-looking girl. Malayalee girl is the model of cleanliness."⁶

This article is written by a male author called E Sankaran Unni. The male voice hence can remarkably differ in the magazine. In another article called "The Function of woman in the National Upbuilding" (December 1907) written by "An Indian Gentleman"⁷, woman is hailed as the annada, the food-giver of a nation. He constantly refers to women as "our mothers, our sisters and wives" and calls them "the presiding deity of the home". The idea is that the women are the tenderest creature and while men do the actual, the real and the hard things for the nation, the woman should sweeten it with their love and innate tenderness. He concludes that the "Woman, as sister, wife, and most signally as mother, supplies the force which alone can ensure conquest and triumph to the ideas that regenerate societies and nations".

These are one of the rare columns in the magazine where the male voice speaks. These are also very few columns in which national imagination is expressed. In other columns, the question of nation is conspicuously absent. In fact, in one of the article India is being declared as England's "adopted child".⁸ There are other creative descriptions used to describe India's relationship with Britain. Often the tone is either of paternalistic relationship or of mutually beneficial relationship between the two countries. This is in complete contrast to the various other Indian magazines, for instance "Stree Darpan" published from the North Indian town of Allahabad. There the national imagination is vividly expressed in the magazine alongside the issues of widow remarriage and other women's issues. In the notes section of that magazine, it is celebrated that the Congress has been able to resolve their issues in their 1920 Congress. The Magazine congratulates Pandit Manmohan Malviya for helping in resolving the issue and hence serving the country.

The magazine in that sense may seem to transcend the question of nation. But the question of nation would often lurk deep inside. The magazine abounds with articles about women in different countries of the world. There are extensive forays into the situation of women in countries like China, Japan, Korea and others. Though the women in these countries are seen with curiosity, those of the women in the west are often admired for their progress. For instance an article on the women of Maine in US starts as, "Strange would be the impressions and experiences of an Indian woman suddenly transported from the heart of Zenana to the town of Norway, Maine in the United States of America. In this city, women not only work in gainful occupations with men, but actually take their places- oust them out of their positions- and manage all kinds of business exclusively and independently."⁹

⁶ E Sankaran Unni "Malayalee Girl" (January 1908) *Indian Ladies Magazine*

⁷ "An Indian Gentleman" "The function of Woman in the National Upbuilding" December 1907, *Indian Ladies Magazine* NMML

⁸ "My mother" *Indian Ladies Magazine* February 1907 Issue 4 pp.45

⁹ "What women are doing in America" *Indian Ladies Magazine* February 1907, Issue 7NMML, New Delhi

English girls also come for praise. Detailed habits and pleasures of English girls are described. One article sums them up as "The Girl who enjoy herself—Shopping, Calling, Theatres, Tea Parties, At Homes".¹⁰ It goes on to describe the pleasures the English girls indulge in, the liberal education they get and the energy they display. They are free to enjoy their lives and hence go for shopping, theatres and other pleasurable excursions. Even though the article declares at the outset about the class of these girls- mostly upper middle-class- it never bothers to investigate the lives of poorer or rural English girls. The class in this magazine remains important. Indian and English women are both writing in this magazine and creating a way of communication among themselves.

Often the narrative that is built is of emancipated or emancipating western women enjoying the pleasures of life which the Indian Ladies are largely deprived of. The prism through which other eastern women are viewed is also revealing. For instance, an article¹¹ on Chinese women is written in intensely religious language describing China as a dark land where the ignorance about the situation of women persists. This is true of the case of women in other countries like Korea. Articles depicting the lives of women of other parts of the world are largely missing though series of articles on Japanese women¹² and society are published in the magazine.

Certain politicization of the issues is largely missing in the *Indian Ladies Magazine*. The magazine appears to be reluctant to take various women's issues politically. This comes as a stark contrast to the women's issues in the political domain in magazine like "Stree Darpan". For instance, in an article about "Vote seeking women"¹³, a detailed description is given about women's struggles in the East and West. This is followed with the women's suffrage movement in Britain and it is hoped that the women's struggle wins there. The suffering of women is also compared to that of Britain. In the *Indian Ladies Magazine*, it is largely in cultural realm that the debate is happening. There is an avoidance of the realm of politics.

All of this of course does not mean there is agreement among what the relations between two different races of women. In fact, the question of amicable racial relations, at least, among women seems to be one of the foremost objectives of this magazine. In other words, the magazine encourages the "social intercourse among different kinds of women". And yet, as I have pointed above, there are huge disagreements over how to go about it or who is responsible for the failures to achieve this. This disagreement also points to the racial tussle that permeated at a deeper level. An author describing herself as the "Daughter of the Land" writing

in an article called "Unrest in India- The Social Impact"¹⁴ blames the English lady for not enquiring about the Indian women and considering her as a level lesser than herself. She then suggests that the gulf can only be bridged by English women regarding the Indian women as people whom they can be really friends with.¹⁵

This article is then contested by a lady calling herself as an English lady. In an article titled "English and Indian women"¹⁶, she criticizes the position taken by the "daughter of the land" and argues that the article ignores an important obstacle i.e. the official position of English men in India. She writes that most Indian men make friendships to find favours from the British official classes. Hence they are not capable of disinterested friendships. She then goes on to talk about the impossibility of having social intercourse due to the bad weather, the seclusion of Indian women and the short period of stay.

This article interestingly was critiqued by the editor herself and the editor sticks to the point that the social intercourse between two races would bring amusement to both. The fact that the editor had to intervene points out the importance of the issue to the magazine and its editor. It was one of the basis on which the magazine was built. The article is also criticized by the "Daughter of the Land" who provides a rebuttal to her argument.

Another perspective is provided by an Englishman in the later editions who gives a "plea for greater contact between Europeans and Indians"¹⁷. The period is of greater nationalist assertion and boycott of British products and the author hopes that Indian people would not boycott the British people. He blames the misunderstanding between the Indian people and British officials for lack of social intercourse. The deference paid to the British officials by the Indian people and certain British national traits, he reasons, influences the authoritarian attitude of the British towards the Indians. He hopes that eventually the Indians and the British would find a common ground for healthier communication.

This interesting exchange of arguments reveals the inner tension between the two races owing to the different stations they are in. It brings forth the contradiction of a women's magazine brought about in times of colonial modernity. Can a woman's magazine based on a common womanhood blur the racial and material distinction of these two different peoples? Can the question of womanhood transcend the question of race and nation? These are the unresolved questions that the magazine reveals to us. These questions also become relevant owing to the time they were posed in.

Indian womanhood itself is spoken in the dominant patriarchal narrative by the women themselves. The culture is

¹⁰ "How English Girls Live" *Indian Ladies Magazine* March 1902, Issue 6 NMML, New Delhi

¹¹ "Chinese Women" *Indian Ladies Magazine* March 1902, Issue 9, NMML, New Delhi

¹² "Trip to Japan" *Indian Ladies Magazine* February- October 1912, Issue 7, NMML, New Delhi

¹³ "Vote seeking women" Stree Dharma, 1920

¹⁴ A Daughter of the Land "Unrest in India- The Social Impact" *Indian Ladies Magazine*, 1907, NMML, New Delhi

¹⁵ ibid

¹⁶ An English Lady "English and Indian women" *Indian Ladies Magazine*, NMML, New Delhi

¹⁷ An Englishman "A Plea for Greater Contact between English and native" *Indian Ladies Magazine* October 1927 Issue 8, NMML, New Delhi

modified but the language remains the same. For instance an Indian Lady writing about the "Indian Woman"¹⁸ hails the woman as the *Pativrata* i.e. . . ." keeping the vows to their husbands". Departing from the usual narrative, she then goes on to say that educating women would not harm this image of the women. This image of women is what they have earned. She argues that Education will enhance the image of the *Pativrata*. In fact, she writes that the women could lose the image of *Pativrata* if they are not educating themselves. Even though home should be women's primary concern, the woman should also apply her intellect in outside affairs.

The wider fear she is addressing here is the male anxiety about women getting educated. She explains in a novel manner that the education of Indian woman would lead to fundamentally different consequences than that of the western women. The western women themselves are of different nature than Indian women because they belong to different environment. But the Indian women would not state to become equal to man in all matters. Therefore, the men must take the risk of educating them. Risk, she says, is always worth taking and is a part of a life. The author tries to placate the male anxieties of men by removing their fears of the educated women.

Here the author tries to construct a narrative of emancipation that is not radical or shocking to the male society. By doing that, a difference is also constructed between the Indian and Western women. Indian women are neither capable nor predisposed to equality of all kinds; western women are. Yet Indian women should be educated so they become equal to their male counterparts. Another article written by an Indian Lady advises girls not to be bored with their home life and "lighten the mother's cares, to make the father forget his anxieties, and to increase the children's happiness by sharing their little joys with all a child's delight."¹⁹ Home is the sphere for women and they must learn to cultivate all the graces of womanhood to be blessing in their homes, she further advises. The advice is for girls who are growing into adolescence and may find it difficult.

In *Stree Darpan*, the ideal of *pativrata* is explained by a long story which has a moral message at the end. The story is about two orphan sisters who happen to lose their parents. The elder sister gets her young sister married. The younger sister takes up *pativrata* seriously as the religion. Once when the elder sister went to visit the younger sister, the younger sister doesn't meet her until she gets permission from her husband. It so happens that her husband had asked her to get milk and while she brought it, he fell asleep and so stood there for two hours waiting for him to wake so that she can give the milk and get the permission. When she finally goes to meet her sister, she finds her angry but eventually she is calmed by her sister's religious worshipping of her husband.

She goes back convinced to do precisely that and marries a physically handicapped person. She dedicates

herself completely to her husband. Seeing this religious devotion, the Gods themselves are so pleased that they want her to go to the heaven. She refuses and they ask the husband too who they think only becomes eligible because of his wife's actions. He also refuses and wants to take the permission of the kingdom's ruler. Eventually, the whole kingdom manages to reach heaven. The moral message that is intended to be delivered is how *pativrata* pleases the Gods and makes the entire people reach heaven.

The article is written by a lady from Kanpur who describes herself as the daughter of Vikramjit Singh²⁰. The fact that she hasn't even given her name and wants to be identified by her father's identity speaks volumes about her own intentions. It is surely a part of the magazine's columns about past. What does it intend to convey? It is hard to fathom whether it is the redemptive quality of the women's dedication or the women itself that is emphasized here. But it is all constructed in intensely religious idiom of devotion and redemption. Women are a means to that redemption, specifically the institution of *pativrata*.

To come back to *Indian Ladies Magazine*, the editor of the magazine, Kamala Saththianadhan, describes the ideal woman as one who "never seeks to rake up her husband's past. She must be exactly what her husband imagines her to be. She must know nothing about those subjects on which her husband is accustomed to lay down the law. She does not wait up for her husband, if he is unavoidably detained at clubs. She is always well-dressed, and takes a pride in her charms; but she should not be too ostentatiously good-looking. She knows sixteen ways of arranging flowers on the dining table. She knows how to choose a juicy joint of mutton. She can make a salad. If there are sandwiches left over from one of her parties, she does not insist upon her husband eating them. She eats herself and suffers in silence."²¹

It is a very detailed picture of domesticity that Kamala builds. Even though this domesticity is not docility, she nevertheless inspired by her Christian ideals builds up an image of a woman who is a locus of feelings. It is a narrative that is recycled in the magazine. The narrative is that though women deserve education and emancipation, it should not come at the cost of women's home and domestic life. The domestic life should always be lived in harmony and according to the wishes of the husband. Partha Chatterjee argues the Indian National movement resolved the question of women by subordinating it into the spiritual domain which was an autonomous territory. The women's education itself became an ideal of femininity. Woman's education would enhance the way woman managed their homes. As Chatterjee puts it, "Once the essential "femininity" of women was fixed in terms of certain culturally visible "spiritual" qualities, they could go to schools, travel in public

¹⁸ Indian Woman "An Indian Lady" *Indian Ladies Magazine* February 1908 Issue 7 pp.34

¹⁹ Indian Lady "Some Thoughts for Child" *Indian Ladies Magazine* December 1910, NMML, New Delhi

²⁰ "What is the religion of Pativrata" *Stree Darpan* February 1920 Issue 7 pp.80

²¹ Kamala Saththianadhan "Who is the Ideal Woman" *Indian Ladies Magazine* June 1928, NMML, New Delhi

conveyances, watch public entertainment programs, and in time even take up employment outside the home".²²

1) Caste

That question of caste itself is subordinated in the magazine or is rarely mentioned. This is in complete contrast to the case of North Indian magazine "Stree Darpan" where caste is often mentioned in detail. While describing people of Madras, a writer called Uma Nehru says that "Madras has two kinds of upper-caste people- Aiyar and Aiyenegar."²³ Then it goes on to describe the kind of precautions these castes take and what kind of marriages they have. In an article called "The Lucky Wife"²⁴ published in the *Indian Ladies Magazine*, the question of inter-caste marriage is subordinated to the background. The woman, an upper caste woman, is married to the lower caste man after much hassle and comes lucky to her. She eventually wins him a lottery and they become very well-off. The question of caste which is playing in the background is subordinated in the discussion. The author celebrates it as people with advanced ideas but refuses to discuss the caste oppression in a direct manner.

The article itself is perhaps written by a man. The message is that woman can be extremely lucky to men—even those that don't belong to our caste. But the factor of luck is emphasized and the inter-caste marriage is either subordinated or considered a smaller issue of the story. However caste does surface in other parts of the magazine. The editorial note endorses a hostel for Hindu and Mohomedan people²⁵. The hostel will only admit unmarried girls and widows of upper-castes Hindus and Muslims. Purdah will be strictly observed in the Hostel. The kitchens are also separate for both Mohammedan and high caste Hindu women. In the Application form, caste and religion are considered synonymous. This detailed advertisement about the hostel taking care of the needs of the upper-caste Hindi and Muslim women is revealing of the intended readership of the magazine and the issues of the financial viability of this magazine itself.

The caste is also manifest in the Hindu Woman's Home Association in Pune which is reported by the magazine. The audience at the attendance of the fourteenth year of this association is divided into various castes along with their population. These included Konkanastha Brahmins, Desabatha Brahmins, Devrukhe Brahmins etc. It is suggested that ladies from these different castes can emancipate their own people. And a request is made to the ladies to serve their people. The people are all part of different groups or communities. The idea is that each group should emancipate itself. The nation is largely missing as a frame of reference. Could this be because of the editor's own minority religious identity?

²² Partha Chatterjee, "The Nationalist Resolution of Women's Question" in "Empire and Nation: Essential Writings 1985-2005" Permanent Black 2012 pp.131

²³ Uma Nehru "People of Madras" pp.37 *Stree Dharma* Allahabad 1920

²⁴ N Venkatapathy "The Lucky Wife" *Indian Ladies Magazine* October 1930 pp.133-140

²⁵ Editorial Note *The Indian Ladies Magazine* 1907 Issue 6 pp.27

2) Advertisements and Columns

The question of readership of the magazine is also extremely important. As I have mentioned above, new columns had been progressively added to the magazine. One of the columns that had existed for long was the "Our needle-work column"²⁶. In it, it was tried to appeal to the busy housewife by showing designs new gowns that can be wore. As one of the details goes, "The blouse is tucked at the shoulder from the front to the armhole, the pleat in the centre being a double one, whilst the sleeves are small bishop ones, set with straight cuffs, and can be rolled up as required when engaged in culinary or other domestic work." As is evident an appeal is made to the housewife of the usefulness of this gown and how comfortable it would be in indulging in culinary or other domestic work. A certain ideal of domesticity is also appealed to.

In a similar vein a column on Children called "Children's page"²⁷ was also added to the magazine. It mostly consisted of the simple stories that can be easily understood by the children. In one of the stories a noble but poor village boy is saved by the stupidity of the enemies. The story is concluded as "Even enemies who dispute among themselves do us good." "What has been Done for and by Indian Ladies" is the most persistent column in the magazine. It is where the various Ladies across the country and abroad are reported about. For instance, in one of such meetings held in Bangaore, a paper was read on "Sukannaya" a woman of the Puranic age. Her conduct is described as "Fierce, exemplary, holiness, piety and virtuous" and is set as an example to the modern sisters.

Certain changes had been brought to the magazine in 1927 when it restarted in print after its editor, Kamala came back from United States of America. New columns sprang up like the "Fashion suggestions". One such fashion suggestion claims that the objective of fashionable dress is decency, ornament and protection against cold. Series of other columns too get added at that time. These are the columns on household hints, on Health, one called "Friendly chats" and the other on Poetry. Special columns called "Pages for mother" are added too.

Children's column had an explicit purpose of increasing social intercourse among the different ladies. It was one of the suggestions given to the editor. The idea was to discuss the common childhood, as they had discussed the common womanhood. The fact that fashion columns were being added signifies to a demand among the ladies for it. It signifies the fact that they were no longer contented with the usual needle column and demanded sophisticated dressing style. This is in contrast to the *Stree Darpan* where women are taught the skill of sewing and spinning as a move to self-independence. Columns like "Shilp Siksha" in that magazine explained in detail about how to sew and when and how to take rest. The intended readers were of course the lower middle-class and poor women, mostly widows who may find a way to support

²⁶ "Our needle-work column" *The Indian Ladies Magazine* 1907 Issue 6 pp.27

²⁷ "Our Children' Page" *The Indian Ladies Magazine* 1908 Issue 8 pp.98-99

themselves. The letters to the magazine itself reveals how popular those columns were. Women wrote to the magazine congratulating the magazine for publishing it and encouraging it to be adopted. In particular, the issue of the independence of the widows seems to be popular to the reader and often detailed suggestions are given by the reader to improve their situations.²⁸

Advertisements too in the *Stree Darpan* seem to appeal to the middle-class households. They are also endorsed for being made in the country. This is in line with the conscious policy of supporting the national cause by this magazine²⁹. An advertisement for an ether talks about the powerful and pleasant smell of it and how it would become impossible to replace it. In similar vein is an advertisement for "Bhootnath" oil.³⁰ The advertisement states that it is certain that once a household used this oil, it will never wish to replace it. The specialty of the oil is claimed to be its ability to cool the mind.

There are oils which are specifically meant for people who do mental labour-lawyers, barrister, school children, youth etc. It also strengthens the root of the hair. Therefore, it saves hair from falling due to age. Then there are oils meant for the aristocrats called "Begum Bahar". It is supposedly made of expensive ingredients and hence it not cheap. It costed around seventeen Rupees and is curative and very fragrant. In fact, there are products to increase appetite and clean blood. A unique pen is also advertised titled "Pen of Dr. Favour". Its uniqueness lies in its ability to fill the ink and clean it on its own. A certain sense of personal cleanliness, of health and intellect seem to be promoted by the advertisements in the way they facilitate people to achieve them. The concern with hair also seems to be a certain preoccupation with age. The prices of these materials are claimed to be reasonable and within reach.

It is interesting that there are advertisements specifically marked for women. Therefore, there is hair oil which is meant for the women and helps them make beautiful. It is claimed that it will make them more beautiful and intelligent. The company advertising it is usually located in the then Calcutta but it can be available through an agent in Allahabad. These advertisements include medicines for infertility. The advertisement states that there is no disease like infertility, hence it needs its cure. It claims that one box of the medicines is enough to cure this disease. Testimonies of the successful use by the previous consumers are also given to convince the potential users.³¹

To talk about prices, *Stree Darpan* seems to be sensitive to the prices of the commodities. There are detailed articles on the increase in the prices of basic consumption articles since the last forty years and how it is impacting the general population. The prices of all general commodities like sugar,

salt etc. has increased³². It has also become difficult to hire servants because everyone is demanding higher wages. Industrialization is suggested as a solution and the women are rebuked for not buying the Swadeshi products. They are criticized for being tempted by the shine of the foreign products.

The question of class lurking in the background hence also becomes important. In *Stree Darpan* for example, various extravagance like spending excess of money on religious festivals is discouraged and instead is suggested to give more money the widow's hostels. The Ladies however were a group of literate women who had sophisticated tastes and interests. Not merely class, but caste and religion also become important. The women are often represented based on their caste, religion or racial groupings. In fact, a certain sense of curiosity is also evoked in the way the women of different groups are written about. Muslim women's issues are raised on the ever perennial issue of Purdah. The debates range about its scriptural sanction and the actual practice. The conclusion is always that its oppressive yet Muslim women often get represented as Purdah women. Muslim women and Purdah is remarkably synonymous throughout the *Indian Ladies Magazine*.

Conclusion

Women's magazine across the nation differed in their perspectives of the issues involved. While both magazines that I have analyzed above vowed for women's emancipation, they took the question of women in different ways. This itself was influenced by the question of class and nation. In the case of *Indian Ladies Magazine*, the endeavor was to narrate the struggles of women's common victimhood across the world with a focus on Indian women. In *Stree Darpan* we see however that the women's concerns were raised alongside that of the nation. In the *Indian Ladies Magazine*, the attempt to depict the common womanhood was countered by the nationalist narrative that many Indian women built. Various debates that occurred across the issue of social intercourse are also a case in point.

In a way the idea of common womanhood is stifled by the Indian situation being a British colony. The perspective is also Christian and liberal. Issues of political importance are rarely covered perhaps to avoid the direct antagonism with the colonial State. In fact the magazine tried to argue from the British vantage point blaming inner traits of Indians, for instance, for poor social relations among British and Indians. For *The Indian Ladies* magazine wanted to emancipate the women without India itself being politically emancipated from the British rule. And yet, it gave voice to nationalist leaders like Sarojini Naidu or Annie Beasant. This is in stark contrast to the positions taken by other women's magazines. *Stree Darpan*, for instance, talks about the women's suffrage movement while it is entirely absent in the case of *Indian Ladies Magazine*.

²⁸ Letter to the Editor, *Stree Darpan* 1920 Issue 8 pp.101

²⁹ "One new thing" *Stree Darpan* 1920 Issue 8 pp.45 (my translation)

³⁰ ibid

³¹ "Badhkari Vatika" *Stree Darpan* February 1920 Issue 9 pp.104

³² "The increase in cost of basic consumption in India" *Stree Darpan* March 1, 1920 Issue 7 pp.105

Class too is extremely important to understand the dynamics of these magazines. The readership had a say on the issues the magazine engaged with. As Orsini puts it, some of these magazines supplanted the informal education that women got in the homes. The editor of *Stree Darpan*, Rameshwari Nehru, was active in setting up a Mahila Samiti (Women's committee) in Allahabad in 1909. The various practical skills that the magazine gave through its columns must have been of huge interest to the literate widows and other poor women. In a way, *Stree Darpan* encouraged certain agency for women more pragmatically than the *Indian Ladies Magazine* which was involved more theoretically in the women's rights movements. *Stree Darpan* was able to use familiar rhetoric like "women as a men's shoe" to bring home better the point of women's oppression.³³

Both the magazines however presented exemplary women as role models. There were columns where women of exceptional courage in the world was talked about and celebrated. There was certain exaggeration too that accompanied the narrative. Both magazines also to an extent justified the women's idealization as the "angel of the home" despite permitting her the freedom to be herself and work outside. It was a very subtle creation of womanhood wherein the intention, as in the case of *Indian Ladies Magazine*, was also to placate the anxieties of the men about the alleged threats posed by the educated women. In the case of *Indian Ladies Magazine*, a certain fundamental racial difference is also invoked to argue this point.

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³³ Francesca Orsini "Domesticity and Beyond : Hindi Women's Journals in the Early Twentieth Century " *South Asia Research* 1999 pp.145