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Entry into the Zenanas: Narratives of Missionary Encounters

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ABSTRACT

The image of the zenana always produced curiosity in the minds of the western travelers and missionaries alike. It constructed a sense of fascination for the former and a reforming zeal for the latter. The justification of the women's presence in the missionary field started with the zenana visitation and in the process different modes of perception of the Indian women emerged. Not only this, such encounters were even used as an opportunity to confirm one's own ideology. Going by the amount of literature written on the zenana visits, one can assume that this led to an important part of the missionary and Indian experience. Much has been written on the institution of purdah that have generalised its very ideology. The closest in this context comes from Eunice De' Souza's "Purdah, An Anthology", has a collection of primary accounts of travellers and missionaries' on the zenanas. Such narratives provide an essential background on the formation of the stereotypical lines of a westernized approach scripted of the zenanas. Missionaries tend to make visits in the households in the name of reform to women who were living in a general degraded position responsible for the decay of the indigenous society. The paper focuses on the women travelers along with the missionary intervention, as both liberally conceptualized the zenanas in their discourses. The zenanas became the "contact zones" for both.

Missionaries and Travelers: Viewing the 'Other'

While reading the descriptions one tends to see a repetition of the zenana encounters, yet they were the most sought-after stories of the travellers and the missionary records. This section covers the various voices of the visitors in the zenanas. Hopefully, the variety of responses in this section will do something to throw light on these accounts that treat them as if they spoke in one voice. For Mary Billington did not have a conventional approach of what would be called a 'missionary perception' towards the zenanas. Journalists like Mary Frances Billington came to India during the 1890's had a conservative outlook. For her Indian womanhood served an example at home for the emancipated feminists. As such her accounts move to and fro from the traditional Indian woman to the not-so-docile woman exposed to new reforms such as widow remarriage and education. She defends the woman of the East when she states that the latter by no means "…. fades from view. A cypher of man's changeless sum of lust past, present, and to come". For she found life in the zenanas simply rather dull, rather prosaic, with few distinctive features of romance, hardship or heroism about it'.[1]Though formally adhering to the restrictions of the purdah, Mary Billington saw it more as a survival in idea of the "protection men gave to their women folk against his neighbours". [2]Interestingly, Billington widens the notion of the reader on the subject of the Indian women, who she felt would stand at par with the women of the west, if the zenana restrictions were withdrawn. Such statements came rare.

Mary Carpenter made a trip as a traveler as early as 1868 and wrote her work in two volumes. In her books, the Christian fervor was strongly visible – "We see the heathenism assuming a daring front in the midst of Christian civilization."[3] Zenanas were the most attention – seeking areas that demanded "immediate cleanliness." However, Carpenter was sure that "discourse with Europeans will lead to a desire to change the condition of such unhealthy abodes, and feel the justice of no longer secluding the most delicate part of the species, to whom home is everything, in the worst part of the mansion."[4]

There was no dearth of accounts that enormously influenced in shaping the future travellers' reaction to India. Many a writing fashioned an image of purdah that deprived women living in it of all the basic needs, be it even medical. Kathleen Olga Vaughan who would not fall in the category of travellers was doctor by profession in the Zenana hospital in Srinagar. The reason her book finds a place here is because it talks of disease and the zenana living simultaneously. She talks of osteomalacia on women deprived of sunlight. [5] A

1 Mary Frances Billington, *Woman in India* (New Delhi: Amarko Book Agency, 1973, Introduction.)
2 *Ibid* p. 122.
3 Mary Carpenter, *Six months in India* (London: Longman Green and Do. 1868. p. 195).
4 *Ibid* p. 63
5 Kathleen Olga Vaughan, *The Purdah system and its Effect on Motherhood: Osteomalacia caused by absence of light in India* (Cambridge: W. Heffer & Sons Ltd., 1928.)

look at the journal from Marchioness of Dufferin[6] gives an idea of her visits to zenana in terms of the plight of the Indian women who could not be examined by male doctors. The memories of the women travelers that threw light on social India, strongly centered around the Indian woman. Popular interest was shown among the missionary readers. J.K.H. Denny represents her views as a history of work for the women in India done by women from England. [7] Zenana visiting she calls "was a most hopeful way of reaching native ladies" and the wish to do this is strongly reflected in her book, through the 'personal influence' of the missionaries. In a way, the circulation of these writings simultaneously helped the western women to take active part in the Church to "Christianize the heathen." Inevitably, the voices of the women missionaries appeared, somewhat on the same lines as the travelers. But interestingly, the indigenous response and the cross-cultural scenario varied in the texts that followed.

By contrast with the missionary women, these women travelers spent a short span of time in India. But both tended to fall into stereotypical pattern of zenana description. Mid-19th century literature saw the revelations of the most hidden accounts that quenched the inquisitiveness of the readers of the West.

Mrs. Marcus Fuller an American missionary with the Christian and Missionary Alliance in India wrote a series of articles on the wrongs of Indian womanhood in a weekly newspaper that were later compiled in a book. [8] Yet another work that is based on selection. And this selection consciously shapes the perception of the "other". She writes, "But it is said that women are contented in their seclusion. This is true. So is the canary, that was born in the cage and never tasted the sweets of the free air." All these writings were meant for a particular home audience having similar assumptions and opinions. Rose Greenfield simply put up 'Zan' a woman, is just the name given to the women's apartment in a Mohammedan house and zenana work is teaching the women in their homes. [9] The work of the zenana worker had to be defined, as now the process represented the women of the church. She was primarily a teacher, in the truest sense a personal friend to her pupils, counselor, a sympathizer, a comforter and to some extent a doctor, using such homely remedies as the knows of and even, sometimes a nurse.'[10]

This overwhelming preoccupation with the zenanas in the colonial context took form of several narratives that attached inordinate cultural importance attached to it. Both the women travellers and the missionaries have been largely leaning towards the colonial power in its constructs. But even in its overall valorised texting, there is a moment of fissure in the text when the western perception, very briefly, subjected to a submissive native gaze. It needs however to be pointed out here that despite these lopsided narratives, they should not be read as entirely divorced from the native perception.

Initial Phase

Caution' had to be used for the initial visit. When in 1854, Mrs. Sale, one of the earlier Baptist Zenana Missionary, gained admittance in a ladies apartment for the first time, she had to keep a low-key approach to gain acceptance in the household. "I entered a large room where there were several women they all seemed startled…….. They had never seen a white face before …… After a while I asked them if they would not like to read".[11] Teaching the women to read was the most promising task to sustain a visit in the zenana. Simultaneously this led to the opening of zenana schools, where ladies of the neighbourhood were taught by a missionary woman. The credit to establish one of the initial zenana schools goes to Mrs. Sale, who did the work in two houses. Her scholars consisted of several grown women, wives, mothers, daughters, "they were taught to read and write Bengalee and to knit in wool and crochet."[12] Within the prevailing paradigm of the zenanas, the women missionary offered multiple activities for the confined women. Although zenana teaching did not prove so productive, however it did provide a breakthrough as a perfect educational setting in the form of schools run by the missionaries. In 1861, The Indian Normal School and Instruction Society was formed in London to cooperate with the ladies in Calcutta and in 1862 sent out ladies for the zenana work.[13] In a quarter of a century from that day, nearly all the women's boards and societies especially engaged in work for women were formed and zenana instruction became a part of the work of almost every mission. The number of mission schools remained modest. In 1876, the Presbyterian Church, USA had 23 schools with 619 students where as in 1888 the Z.B.M.M. had 68 schools and institutions with 3,739 pupils. Although the numbers remained small yet these schools were a major part of zenana activity. With the arrival of women missionaries almost every mission station had a recognized girls school. [14] The Church of England Zenana Society had two girls' school in Batala in

6 Marchioness of Dufferin and Ava, *Our Viceregal Life in India* (2 vols., London : John Murray,1889.)

7 J.K.H.Denny , *Toward the Sunrising : A History of Work for the Women of India done by Women from England 1852-1901* (London: Marshall Bros & Zenana Bible and Medical Mission, n.d.)

8 Mrs. Marcus Fuller, *The Wrongs of Indian Womanhood* (London : Oliphant Anderson and Ferrier,1899).

9 M. Rose Greenfield, *Five years in Ludhiana or Work amongst Indian Sisters* (London: S.W. Patridge & Co., Edinburgh, 1886, p. 28.)

10 BZM Minutes of Conference. Held in Calcutta,Dec.27th 1899-Jan. 1st 1900 (London:Veale, Chifferiel & Co.ltd,p.89)

11 A Tableau to be presented in celebration of the centenary of the founding of the Baptist Zenana Mission. '*1854-Entry into the Zenana*, n.d.

12 Report of the Conference held at Lahore, December and Jan. 1862-63 p. 64.

13 Mrs. Marcus B. Fuller, *The Wrongs of Indian Womanhood* ,p. 260.

14 John Webster, *The Christian Community and Change in the 19th Century North India* (New Delhi:Macmillan, 1976, p. 143.)

1914.The number of pupils, it proudly claimed was 120, as against 69 in 1891.[15]

Though the missionaries illustrated the numbers yet it was not always easy to bring girls' students to the classes. Rev. Golukhnath of the American Presbyterian Missionary at Jullundur, found it extremely "difficult to persuade the people to send their daughter to our schools…….. hence, we must carry out work at once into the zenanas."[16] In a way, having accepted the zenana as a valid arena of activity, the missionaries instead of challenging it, legitimated and reinforced the seclusion of women through their extensive use of zenana visiting.[17]

Glimpses of the early work by the zenana missionaries came through various other initiatives. "Sewing school" to help poor widows were opened by many missionary women. Garments made here were sold in the nearby village.[18] Hence, bracketing the activity as "charitable". Similar needlework was carried enthusiastically in the zenanas by the indigenous women too. Here a discrepancy was visible in the attitudes of the western women. While the missionaries described it as extension of the western tastes, for women like Mary Billington the activity came as display of 'vulgar showiness' of the western look. "When I saw that display, however I did not grasp what I have seen, and that is , that in no branch of Indian art has British influence been so mischievously detrimental as in needlecraft." [19] She held the missionaries responsible for passing the western woolwork to the natives, who had adopted and perpetrated it in the "vilest form".

What came to be seen here was a plurality of voices with varied gaze for a similar framework. Indian women's voice, too largely reflected ambivalent response. In some instances zenana women went to considerable lengths to show their enjoyment towards missionary visits, "Do you know ma'am that I really never sleep. I have so much to do with reading and wool work, besides my house-duties, that I am always busy now."[20] There were some who cried "You come too seldom. What can I learn in one or two lessons a week?" [21] One would assume that over enthusiasm too was dealt cautiously. Three lessons in a week were planned for such pupils, while bible teaching was taught on consecutive days.[22] Whereas, in several cases where marked interest had been shown by a pupil reported Miss C.R. Clark, from Ludhiana "I have been suddenly asked to discontinue my visits, and in one case had the door rudely shut in my face when venturing to make friendly inquiry about my pupils of former days."[23] Nevertheless for the missionary women, the attitude was welcoming where the native woman was "being better able to understand and be understood." How much did the understanding exist between the two? The writings reveal no simple equation between the two: the definition of the 'self' and the 'other' depends on whose gaze is it.The plurality of encounters put across in the texts made the zenana construction a contradictory process.

The indigenous women declared their affection for the missionary women in many ways that showed samples of acceptance of the recipients. Miss Fuller in 1884 opened a new mission station at Ferozepur, passed away very suddenly from internal injuries caused by a fall. One of her pupils said "We did not mourn of our own father and mother as deeply as we mouth for her." [24] Despite the diversity of the encounters, much was based on the degree of dependency of the Indian woman on the missionary woman. Within the various arenas, it was education that gave assurance to the natives to rely on the missionaries. "We have no quarrel with zenana missions", said a Hindu lady speaking in London, "but for zenana missionaries the secluded women of India got their only education that way.' [25]

There were reports of strong contrasts in the religious background of the indigenous women. Ms. Emma Fuller in 1868, visited twenty-four houses, out of which eighteen, were Mohammedan.[26] Missionaries regarded these comparisons as a raw material and preface to the zenana work. "The life of a Punjabi woman comes as a pleasant surprise….. Just the opposite of the zenana woman, who is accustomed to sit with folded hands……"[27] At any rate regardless of these variations the missionaries probably claimed access to households of both, Hindu and Mohammedan zenanas. By framing such visits, the credibility of the women missionaries increased. Yet, things didn't always go as accepted by the zenana missionary.

Missionaries were quick to count the numbers related to zenana work, small though it would seem. In 1877 there were 25 zenana missionaries in North India; Punjab itself had 7. [28] Reporting from Ludhiana, Rose Greenfield accounted a marked increase within five years before 1884-14 houses to 99, and from about 37 pupils to 335.[29]

15 Punjab Government, *Gazetteer of the Gurdaspur District, 1914,* (Lahore: Government Printing Press,1915, p.64.)

16 Report of the Conference held at Lahore, December and January, 1862-63 p. 120.

17 Cited in Leslie A. Flemming 'New Models, New Roles', Leslie A. Flemming, (ed.) *Women's Work for Women, Missionaries and Social Change in Asia* (London:Westview Press, 1920, p. 48.)

18 *The Sixtieth Annual Report of the Ludhiana Mission for the yr 1894, (* Ludhiana: Ludhiana Mission Press, 1895, p. 59)

19 Mary Frances Billington, *Woman in India,* 1894 (New Delhi: Amarko Book Agency,1973p.189.)

20 *Report of the Punjab Missionary Conference held at Lahore, Dec-Jan., 1862-63,* p. 66.

21 BZM Minutes of Conference. Held at Calcutta, Dec. 27th, 1899 – Jan. 1st 1900, p.90.

22 *Ibid* .

23 *The 65th Annual Report of the Ludhiana Mission for the year 1899, Ludhiana Mission Press, Ludhi*ana, 1900 pp.10-11.

24 J.K.H. Denny, *Toward the Sunrising* ,p.80.)

25 EA5/51 The emergence of CEMZS.

26 J.K.H. Denny, *Toward the Sunrising,p.77.*

27 'A Punjabi Village Woman at Home', Mrs. Ireland in *The Zenana, Women's work in India and Pakistan*. September 1936 – Autumn, 1948, , Vol. 44, Dec. 1937, p.4

28 *The Indian Female Evangelist* Vol. IV, July 1878, No. XXVII. p.101.

29 Rose Greenfield, *Five Years in Ludhiana or Work Amongst our Indian,*p. 37.

At every point of the missionary discourse, variations were added, giving different images of the zenanas to the readers. By doing so, the women missionaries believed that they would open the features of social and cultural reality they were encountering. Cultural practices, like idleness and disorderly lifestyle became the stereotype Indian Woman.

But in a Mohammedan house there was no neatness…….. In one corner cooking would be going on, accompanied by blinding smoke, cocks and hens, ducks and goats added to the confusion. When the despairing missionary rose to drive them away, then squeals and cries only make matters worse…… no wonder that books were torn or lost, ink dry, pencils no where to be found, pens broken.[30]

On the contrary, to all the chaos found in the zenanas, the women missionary made a distinct effort to make her visit perfect and crisp. And to her surprise, some zenana women attached great importance to the etiquettes of the visitor, who at times happened to be an Indian woman who was employed by the missionary. Here, it was evidently found that the indigenous convert's success to an extend, depended on the mannerisms she presented. On this, Mrs. Winter had to report that she sent a native Christian daily to a Hindu family but unfortunately her manners offended them to such that they declined her service.[31] Hence, attempts were made to remove such objections. Suggestions came in the Punjab Conference in 1882 for the preparation of a manual that would provide the directions of the Zenana work and conduct especially for the use of Indian assistants. [32] Since it was considered to exercise a steady influence on the heathen women, missionaries used persuasive powers when confronted with refusal.

Zenana Missionary Literature: Forming Identities and Perceptions

The Missionary woman gradually transformed herself into an emphatic observer committed to "elevate" the condition of the heathen women. It was perhaps this "concern" that led to a number of accounts by the zenana missionaries that undermined her position as well as that of whom she came in contact with. The outlook presented in the texts fueled the popular opinion that the uplifting of the social position of the Indian women is one of the most crying needs "……. which requires women of high attainments and wide and understanding sympathies." [33] Broadly, the texts can be classified in two categories. The first one provided a lens through which readers back home saw the "heathen" lands and accordingly shaped their perceptions. The other were the texts mainly published in the heathen lands for the indigenous readers. This was one of the "direct means to proselytise" as Kenneth Jones states through street and bazaar preaching, through the publication and dissemination of religious tracts and journals, and through education remained the major forms of Christian evangelism.[34] Here the missions claimed a direct link between Christianity and a better way of life for the non-Christian women. The texts were targeted for zenana visitation and in course of time for readers to know more about the 'true message of Christ.' The necessity for a closer focus in the viewpoints of the missionaries through publishing texts led this chapter to take a look at the published material of various societies. The voices of the indigenous women remain almost silent yet they could not be fully suppressed.

Towards the latter half of the nineteenth century, efforts came for textual production various press units were set up for producing written materials. In a way, these earliest texts were means by which the subjects of the imperialist circle could put forth their thoughts about the 'colonisers' and the 'colonised'. Gareth Griffiths while analyzing the receptive life stories and personal conversion narratives produced from the 1870s to 1920s states that although the voices of the missionized "subjects" may seem to have got rather lost in these ventriloquized texts, read against the grain they reveal traces of the converted colonized subject.[35] Mission texts, like other texts in the colonial languages, could thus be both an instrument of oppression and a means of resistance, depending upon the circumstances of their production.

The Ludhiana Press was established in 1835 and soon produced a stream of tracts, pamphlets, journals in Punjabi,Hindi, Urdu, Persian and Kashmiri. An added asset that came with these publications was that the missionaries both popularized and standardized the North-Western languages. Within its first 3 years, the Ludhiana Press released 68,000 volumes, while other missionary presses soon added to this stream of polemical literature after 1849.[36]

The British and Foreign Bible Society was established at Lahore in 1863, that controlled work from Delhi to Peshawar and from Karachi to the Northern Frontier. It's object was to print and circulate the translations of the Holy Scriptures.[37] Colporteurs and Bible women were employed by the Society. In the same year the Punjab Religious Book Society was established. All subscription and donations arising from the Society's business as book-sellers and stationers were devoted to the publication of vernacular literature. Further effort in the same field came from the Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge – the Vernacular Literature Society. The latter society was mainly concerned with the production of literature in connection with

30 J.K.H. Denny, *Toward the Sunrising*, p..*78.*

31 *The Women of India and What Can be Done for Them* (Madras:Christian Literature Society, 1895, p. 49.)

32 *Ibid* p. 51.

33 Louise Creighton, *Missions: Their Rise and Development*.(London:Williams and Northgate,nd p.213)

34 Kenneth Jones, *Arya Dharma Hindu Consciousness in 19th century Punjab* (New Delhi:Manohar ,1976, p.9)

35 Gareth Griffiths, 'Trained to tell the Youth: Missionaries, Converts and Narration', in Norman Etherington(ed.)., *Mission and Empire (*New York: O.U.P., p. 155.)

36 Cited in Kenneth W. Jones, *Arya Dharm Hindu Consciousness in 19th Century Punjab*., New Delhi: Manohar, 1976, p. 8 *Ibid* pp. 75-76.

37 Punjab Government, *Gazetteer of the Lahore District ,1913-14*,p.77.

the Church of England and carried its book business through the agency of the Punjab Religious Book Society. [38]

As the in-flow of zenana visits increased, the missionaries felt the need for specific literature to be ministered for such discourses. In the Punjab Ladies Missionary Conference held in 1882, Ms. Greenfield read a paper on 'Educational literature' where the need for suitable books for zenana visits was pointed out. "No sooner does the new comer enter on zenana or school work that the question arises 'What books shall I use?' And much of the success of her work will depend on a wise choice." "Wise choice" included lessons comprising moral and religious teaching, lessons on sanitary arrangement, geography, history, arithmetic and letter writing. In connection to this, one of the earliest zenana reading books published in 1875 in the principal languages of India was by the Christian Vernacular Education Society. [39]

The Christian Literature Society of the Punjab Branch provided literature for Indian readers in the vernacular languages of the Punjab. Number of translatory work was undertaken, separate for Moslem and Hindu readers. [40]It covered diverse subjects ranging from health to training of children. Similar attempts were followed in 1888, when in the Ladies Conference in the same year emphasis was made to prepare series of books for the zenana, which had to be pervaded by a religious spirit.

Very soon, as anticipated, the zenana visiting was a favourite subject for detailed descriptions in women's missionary journals. These missionary texts were the most effective way for disseminating information among overseas readers and missionaries. Articles especially from 1880-1900 reflect many of the contemporary debates in missionary areas about issues like the women's entry in the mission societies, and their strong need to reach 'heathen' women. They also echoed the concerns about the missionary women in the Indian field. "It is important for a woman to know her work thoroughly if she is to be in India than if she intends to practice at home because there is no possibility of calling in further help and the practitioner must be quite independent of expensive medical and surgical appliances, etc……"[41] Besides providing important tips to the aspiring missionaries, the journals covered almost every detail of the zenana work. In 1877, for example, the summary of the operations for North India were given as below. Zenana missionaries – 25, Punjab-7, number of zenanas visited-32. Such reports, the missionaries believed would provide an impetus for further missionary intervention.

One of the most popular early CMS Periodical was the *CMS Gleaner* (1841-1921). Reports covered here were comprehensively detailed with pictures. These drawings captured the depiction of the missionary gaze and conveyed a 'complete' picture of 'what they saw'. Sketches, such as, of a closed zenana with sari-clad women cooking in a smoke - filled – room, were self – descriptive. [42]

The Baptist Zenana Missionary regularly featured its zenana activity in an annual report *Zenana work & Bible Women in India and China.* (I could lay my hands on a few BZM Reports from 1896-97 till 1911-1912). The literature was never self-critical. The main aim was to "make new friends", who would later be members of their "family". The passages always ending on an optimistic tone. "It is disappointing when a woman is getting on nicely with her lessons, to find that she must go off to her village… But yet it may be that by this means the Gospel which she has heard and the hymns she has learned get spread, into places otherwise unreached by us."[43]

Assuming authority and expertise through such texts was easy for missionary writers, as few of their readers were likely to be in a position to challenge their claims. Missionary texts were clearly meant for Church people and mission related people and attracted Christian readership.

Given the title of such textual production, not, surprisingly, the title of journals and other missionary literature were typically focused on the "heathen" woman in need of "redemption". Pamphlets were widely circulated. Their main purpose being to raise money – a call for philanthropic work. Almost every report ended with a plea for voluntary financial help. In some cases a "form of request was added that not only welcomed monetary help but land or houses too." [44]

The missionary women remained aggressive in their objective and used literature with the same zeal. As a consequence, they made a space for themselves in a male-dominated church setup. Till 1900s the zenana missionary literature mostly focused on "heathenism" that gradually dropped from the turn of the century. The dimensions of missionary literature changed, the woman missionary was no longer seen as a mere redeemer but also as a builder of Christian institutions that broadened the horizon of her work.

Conclusion

It is only appropriate to end this paper with the question that needs to be probed whose construction did the zenanas attribute to? The zenanas were depicted as a social space with an interactive relationship between the indigenous woman and the western woman. Both being marginalized in

38 *Ibid* p.78

39 *The Women of India and What can be done for them*,p.25

40 *The Punjab Mission of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America for the year 1906*, (Ludhiana: Ludhiana Mission Steam Press,1907 p. 18.)

41 *The Indian Female Evangelist* Vol. VI, Jan 1879, No. XXIX, pp. 209-10.

42 *The Church Missionary Society Gleaner*, Nov. 1893, p. 165.

43 *Report of the Ladies' Association for the Support of Zenana work & Bible Women in India & China*, BZM. For 1896-94 (London, 1897 p. 5).

44 *Report of the Ladies' Association for the Support of Zenana work & Bible Women in India & China*,BZM Report for1910-1911 (London, 1910,p.51)

the patriarchal order, were determinants of the respective society they belonged to.

Reading the zenana accounts one can imagine to the extent to which Christian imagination in Britain was flared by the imagery of the 'poor' Hindu and muslim women. Missionary literature strongly reflected that by adopting a sense of superiority the missionary women put forth and at times exaggerated the need to bring social reform in the society. Zenana education hence, was the outcome of such visits. But ironically, the acceptability of education among the non-Christian and zenana women was far less than the indigenous Christian converts.

Although zenana visitation was not efficacious yet in either its educational or its evangelistic forms was an almost distinctively nineteenth century work, adapted to conditions which later changed.

Despite the fading of the zenana work in the beginning of the twentieth century yet the most conventional constructions of the indigenous women was to be found by the missionary women in the zenana itself. Here again, the western traveler along with the missionary woman defused herself with the cause of social reform. The missionary women were feminists only to a certain degree. The moment they realized that their approach in the traditional set up of the Indian society could be harmful to their position in the mission field, the women missionaries withdrew. With zenana as a backdrop, the women's movement gradually became more institutional-oriented with a blend of Christian service. Their entry into the zenanas was an achievement in itself for the women missionaries, the gain was theirs. The irony remained that for the indigenous women exposure to western thoughts came in the form of mission institutionalization such as schools and hospitals for women and not *within* the zenana quarters.

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