

CORNELIA SORABJI

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alter. "Cornelia Sorabji (with Superimposed Facsimile Signature)" (entury)). [One More Voice](#) (an imprint of Livingstone Online), site 20.

Cornelia Sorabji's Early Life, Education and Social Activism

Cornelia Sorabji is considered to be one of the most influential Indian female social activists who helped pave the way for female activism in her country. She was born in the western side of India in 1866 during the time of British colonization of her country. Sorabji's parents were Parsee Christian who converted from Zoroastrianism.

Having such a cultural background and living in a colonized country where the majority of the population practiced Hinduism, Cornelia's primary concern was defending women's rights and children's welfare. Such socio-cultural concerns influenced the trajectory of her life and were reflected on her academic interests and professional future.

After years of education in India and Britain during times when such a path was not as easy for women as it was for men, Sorabji succeeded in becoming "the first woman to study law in England and the first Indian woman to become a lawyer" (Banerjee 2006, 283).

Sorabji's position as a female activist and lawyer had presented her with more challenges as her efforts to change Indian social construct coincided with British colonization. Quiring (2021) asserts that Sorabji's attitude toward the colonial power was positive because she relied on the Victorian presence to "reinforce her respectability" given the fact that her targeted audience was "of erudite, Western, white woman readers" as she "wrote about a set of women who her readers could not access on their own: a community of racialized and confined women in oppressive domestic environments" (2).

She had spent many years in Britain and though her social activism was primarily focused on issues facing women and children in her home country, her perception of India's future was almost always connected to the continuity of the colonization.

During the time when Mahatma Gandhi was pushing for India's independence in his anticolonial movement, Sorabji presented herself as a "self-styled defender of the British Raj" while she was touring Britain and India in the 1930s.

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Therefore, one can not ignore the fact that Sorabji's efforts and achievements were clouded by the complex historical context of colonized India.

Sorabji continued her activism until her death in London in 1954, almost seven years after India's independence. During her long and eventful life, she published nine books and multiple articles that focus on matters concerning Indian women's rights in the late 19 th and early 20 th centuries. In these texts, Sorabji tackled the injustices and ritualistic practices that were imposed on Indian women.

Her works of fiction and nonfiction revolved around portraying those injustices and trying to find solutions that would contribute to social reform. She emphasized giving space to Indian femininity and ensuring that traditions through which women were isolated and denied their rights to have access to their everyday needs would be changed.

Sorabji also focused on the roots of social problems as she emphasized protecting infants from the practices that involved purposely neglecting them to the point where those who survived such abuse would grow up with physical and psychological effects that would impact their health for the rest of their lives. Sorabji's experiences in the Indian public sphere coincided with some crucial moments and turns in the history of India which made her unique journey an important part of Indian feminism.

Works Cited

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