Introduction

Cornelia Sorabji, an exceptional Indian female social activist, was born in the western side of India in 1866 during the time of British colonization of her country. Roye (2015) notes that Sorabji's parents were Parsee Christian who converted from "Zorotoastriansim and was strongly committed to social service" (283). 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). She is considered to be one of the most influential Indian female social activists who helped pave the way for female activism in her country.

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). Sorabji 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 a 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 activism, Sorabji presented herself as a "self-styled defender of the British Raj" while she was touring Britian and America in the early 1930s as she was attacking Gandhi and suggesting that he did not have the public support he had (Chattopadhyay 2015, 17). 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 19th and early 20th centuries. In these texts, Sorabji tackled injustices and ritualistic practices that were imposed on 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.

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Annotated Bibliography

Banerjee, Sukanya. 2006. “Empire, Nation, And The Professional Citizen.” *Prose Studies* 28 (3): 291–317.

This article examines Cornelia Sorabji's autobiographical text titled *India Calling*. It discusses Sorabji's life and works through looking at her education in England and her social activism in India.

Burton, Antoinette. 2000. “‘The Purdahnashin in Her Setting’: Colonial Modernity and the Zenana in Cornelia Sorabji’s Memoirs.” *Feminist Review* 65 (1): 145–58.

This essay focuses on Sorabji's perception and portrayal of femininity in her writings of nonfiction during early 20th century India. It focuses on Sorabji's representation of femininity in the public and private spheres. The essay also looks at Sorabji's ability to document the history of Indian femininity through her ability to defend oppressed women.

Chattopadhyay, Sayan. 2015. “Disowning ‘Indianness’: Images of Indian Womanhood and the ‘English’ Self of Cornelia Sorabji.” *Prose Studies* 37 (1): 2–20.

This essay focuses on examining the theme of disavowing Indianness in Cornelia Sorabji's works. It suggests that Cornelia Sorabji presented herself in manner that reflected her attempts to present herself as an English woman. The essay also suggests that fashioning herself in such a manner is done through Sorabji's denial of the element of Indianness in her identity.

Mossman, MaryJane. 2020. “Cornelia Sorabji (1866–1954): A Pioneer Woman Lawyer in Britain and India.” *Women’s History Review* 29 (4): 737–47.

This article examines Cornelia Soabji's journey as the first Indian woman lawyer. It looks at Sorabji's social activism and how she utilized her profession as a lawyer to help Indian women. This essay also discusses Sorabji's political views regarding India's independence and her disagreements with Mahatma Gandhi.

Quiring, Ana. 2021. “Behind the Veil of the Zenana: Cornelia Sorabji and the Colonial Heritage of the Trapped Housewife.” *Feminist Modernist Studies* 2 (1): 1–17.

This essay focuses on Cornelia Sorabji's neglected writings and how her support of the colonial power affected the way she was received by the public. It emphasizes how Sorabji adopted a white feminist approach to represent Indian femininity under British colonization. The essay also suggests that Sorabji's work affected the second wave of feminism.

Roye, Susmita. 2015. “Saint or Sinner? Suttee in the Depiction of Flora Annie Steel and Cornelia Sorabji.” *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 52 (2): 281–99.

This essay examines the representation of suttee in the works of Flora Annie Steel, a British writer, and Cornelia Sorabji. It presents an interesting perspective through which the reader can see how these female writers, colonizer and colonized, discuss such a cruel practice against women.