Cornelia Sorabji's interests and position as an Indian female lawyer and social activist who aimed at contributing to the social reform of her country feed into her published works. She was one of the first female writers to address the issues facing Indian women in her writing of fiction and nonfiction. Her education in England and her ability to target both the English and Indian women made her work more influential. Across her nine publications, Sorabji emphasized the importance of addressing the injustices that face Indian women and children to the point where their lives are at stake. Through her writing, Sorabji made sure to portray the unjust social practices and traditions that had been practiced in India for centuries.

The readers can sense Sorabji's attempts to make them sympathize with Indian women and children as she vividly depicts the gentleness and patience of these women in terms of how they handle living in seclusion. The author's portrayal of women in her writing is not limited to evoking the readers' sympathy as she shows the resilience of Indian women and how that can reflect on their will and ability to break away from domesticity. Given Sorabji's college education in India and Britain and her profession as the first Indian female lawyer, Sorabji's success in facing the adversities she had to face seems to compel her to fight for the rights of Indian women through using her education and her socio-political position as a female social reformer who openly supports the British Raj .

There are good examples of the manifestation of Sorabji's approaches to contributing to social reform in her writing*. Love and Life Behind the Purdah*, which is a collection of short stories published in 1901, is a work of fiction that allows Sorabji to depict the Indian society and women's roles in their communities. The interactions between men and women are not the only aspect that these narratives focus on as the author portrays the life of women behind the scenes where they interact with one another without the presence of men as they share their experiences and develop social connections. The stories bring to light various matters that include love, suttee, marriage of children, purdah and the unjust treatment of Indian women during the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century periond. Some of the male characters that Sorabji presents show love and affection for women, yet they believe that women are their subordinates. These stories cover different Indian communities, especially the Hindus. They also discuss some minorities like the Christians, Muslims and Zoroastrians,.

The first short story titled "The Pestilence of Noonday" in *Love and Life Behind the Purdah* speaks to how many women are perceived in India during Sorabji's times. A long conversation unfolds between a wife named Sita and her husband. The conversation is dominated by the man as he lectures his wife after she tells him "how unkind" he is and that she has "spoiled" him (Sorabji 1901, 4). The husband replies: "Remember you are still a Hindu wife, however glibly your tongue may adapt itself to foreign languages" (Sorabji 1901,4).Here Sorabji contextualizes a form of social injustice through focusing on the role of education of women in the Indian society and how certain traditions affect the perception of women's right to have access to education. The husband continues to rebuke his wife as he tells her that he married her "because the astrologers gave the word" and that her dowry "was sufficiently attractive"(Sorabji 1901, 5). In this passage, the author makes clear how some social constraints affect the value of marriage as a social institution that necessitates equality, mutual respect and understating of women's rights.

*Shubala - A Child-Mother* is another text by Cornelia Sorabji. Published in 1920 "with the object of helping the infant welfare work", this pamphlet aims to "arouse the sympathy of the reader for the objects" of an exhibition taking place in Delhi as its stories are "evidently founded on fact" (Sorabji 1920, 1). This work showcases Sorabji's involvement in social events that contribute positively to directing society's attention to the need for saving children and women from any harm or neglect that might result from some traditions and rituals practiced by some members of the community. The pamphlet presents a story about children's marriage and how such a practice affects parents' treatment of their children, especially when it comes to forcing girls to get married at a very young age. Marriage then becomes a "tragedy" that a mother might think that it "could not really … be postponed a minute longer" as parents normally believe that they cannot break "the custom-rules" of their "race" (Sorabji 1920, 3). That it is because social traditions make a child's marriage "after eleven years of age" a condemnation of both parents, dead or alive, to "the lowest re-birth which is possible to human beings" (Sorabji 1920, 3-4). Presenting such a social issue through using such a direct approach is a part of Sorabji's attempts to dealing with such issues in a style of writing that speaks to the importance of raising social awareness and paving the way for social reform.

Pull-Quotes Statement

Here I include a series of quotations from two of Cornelia Sorabji's texts: *Love and Life Behind the Purdah* and *Shubala - A Child-Mother. Love and Life Behind the Purdah* is one of Cornelia Sorabji's well-known publications. Across the different stories that this short-story collection includes, Sorabji sheds some light on the status of Indian women through vividly depicted scenes and carefully tailored roles for both male and female characters. Some good examples of those instances are quoted below.

In the following lines from the story titled "The Pestilence of Noonday", a conversation between a husband and his wife is mostly dominated by the former as the latter has to endure the harsh things he says to her when she questions their relationship as he leaves her at home while he travels:

There is, remember, a habit of loving, and it includes in its generous scope all who come within physical range of its influence – all accustomed daily objects. Think of all that that may mean, Sita, in the long years when you no longer form an item in my immediate horizon. Think of it, and perhaps that will cure you of expecting too much.... Yes! the gods and fate have created you for my convenience and ministration; the only dignity which you can ever acquire will be incidental. (Sorabji 1901, 5)

Be thankful, little Sita, for what of affection and indulgence you have been allowed, and while I am away you will best please me by being a good daughter to my old father. He dotes on you, you know, and – well, I won't promise, but give me your ear, Sita; if you should send me word that I need not fear about the funeral pyre – you understand? – why, I may hurry home in a year or so – who knows?" (Sorabji 1901, 6)

In these passages, Sorabji portrays the husband's poor treatment of his wife. The perception of this man of his wife is limited to what her role is supposed to be in the context in which they live. In the first passage, she is now an "item" in his presence and should be treated like the other "daily objects" in his life. His belief that she was created for his "convenience" is an indication that women's roles in such a context are limited to what social conventions allow them to have. Sorabji captures the unjust structure that denies women the right to be equal to men through voicing the importance of equality through explicitly expressing the man's prejudiced views through his words. In the second passage, the husband continues to remind his wife to be grateful for whatever affection she is "allowed". Such instances shed the light on the gap between women's rights and duties in that historical context.

In another story titled "Love and Life", Sorabji continues her emphasis on how women are objectified by men and treated like toys in the scene that captures a conversation between co-wives where the older one tells the younger wife, who is enthusiastic about her husband's approval of her education, about the reality of their situation and why she thinks education will not not change that reality:

"Oh, Sandal Kuar, I am getting so clever. I can read the Fourth Book in the vernacular, and – He – is so pleased. He is going to teach me English, and yes! also to keep accounts, and to read newspapers. And soon he says, I shall be quite as clever as the memsahibs, whom he sees in England, and sometimes here, and who talk to him as if – as if their brains were men's brains!" (Sorabji 1901, 70)

"Nonsense"! said her senior. "Life is only a play; we tire of first one toy and then another. Have I not wearied of my concertinas? 'Buy what you will,' said His Highness, and I bought near a hundred concertinas. How we played on them every hour, at first, my women and I! And now they lie broken and forgotten. So, you have bought books; they still amuse you. So the king has bought – you!" (Sorabji 1901, 71)

"What a child it is!" said the woman impatiently. "We are all toys, toys of time and space; some battered rather more than others, but all toys, and soon to give place to newer ones!" (Sorabji 1901, 72)

In this scene, the older wife tells the younger one about their roles as women. The younger wife is excited about the fact that she has access to education and that her husband is happy with her progress. She mentions that the women her husband meets in England talk "as if" they have the same mental capacity as that of men. Here Sorabji addresses the intersection of race and gender in the case of Indian context. The husband's anticipation of his young wife's progress exceeds the Indian locale as white English women become the benchmark against which Indian women's intellect can be measured. This speaks to two aspects. The first one this is that this scene problematizes the perception women as having less mental capacity than men. The second aspect reveals how the global scale that British colonization of India results in more opportunities for Indian women to compare themselves to other women from different cultural background. Sorabji is directing the reader's attention to what she perceives as the positive impact of the British Raj, especially if the reader considers her education in England. The older wife tries to convince the younger one that they are only "toys" that their husband would eventually replace. Through such interactions, the story also problematizes polygamy in the Indian society and shows the different mindsets that the older and younger generations of Indian women have.

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*Shubala - A Child-Mother* is another text by Cornelia Sorabji which discusses saving and educating women and children in India during the early twentieth century. Schubala is a young Indian girl who gets married at the age ten. The pamphlet gives examples of practices and traditions that endanger the lives of Indian women and children. Sorabji concludes the text with a message for educated English and Indian women that calls for reconstructing the position of women and children through raising awareness about the importance of providing education and proper healthcare for them.

The following passage discusses an ancient Indian ritual where live coals are placed on a pregnant woman:

The Father-in-law had resumed his instructions translated into English this time, for the Memsahib Nurse: and presently I heard, ''Now it is time to light a fire on the top of the Mother''. Nurse bustled out to seek my help in protesting. This was the ancient way of dealing with the fear of collapse; and Rani explained that it was part of the ritual attending child-birth live coals are placed upon the Mother, "and if it is her fate to live, she will live, though there will be a burn: if it is not her fate to live, she will die.'' (Sorabji 1920, 7-8)

Here Sorabji portrays this gruesome ritual that shows how a woman's life becomes worthless as her ability to continue her life as a mother is contingent upon surviving this torturous practice. This scene is among other scenes that the author presents in order to make clear how such traditions compromise the welfare of women and children. Even those who survive will carry that "burn" with them for the rest of their lives.

In the passages below, Sorabji directly addresses English and Indian women:

I speak to you Englishwomen Mothers and wives who love your homes and your children, who are able to give them all that modern knowledge and skill and science can devise. What are you going to do about this ? I speak to you first, because you best can gauge the harm which is being done to children and to child-mothers, and because there is in your hearts whether born of intelligence and civic persuasion, or of religion the conviction that we are indeed "the keepers" of every other member of the human family. (Sorabji 1920, 20)

I speak to you, Indian women, who are enlightened and educated past the demands of custom, you who have cut yourselves free from the chains that bound, and have claimed the education and the freedom which the West has brought here, to our very doors in our Indian homes. (Sorabji 1920, 21)

What are you going to do about this ? What are we going to do about this ? For I am with you. And with you, together with the debt I owe to England, and to what England has had to teach me, I owe this to India, as part of that English debt of mine. (Sorabji 1920, 21-22)

In these passages, Sorabji makes clear that she believes in the role of English women in helping Indian women and children by appealing to their humanness and religiousness as outsiders looking in. She emphasizes the connection between humans as she believes that they are all a member of the same "human family" regardless of the cultural and racial differences between the Indians and the English. She also addresses privileged Indian woman to take action and help other woman after successfully freeing themselves from the social "chains" that denied them access to their basic rights. She also makes clear that she is a part of the social reform movement in India and that her support for England in addition to her sense of responsibility toward the welfare of Indian women and children make her advocate for women's rights.

References

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