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* 'Thesis' includes 'treatise', dissertation and other similar productions.
OF WATER AND OF THE SPIRIT:

THE BAPTISM OF PANDITA RAMABAI SARASWATI

(A Study in Religious Conversion.)

SUSANNE LAE GLOVER

A thesis submitted in fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy.

School of Studies in Religion          University of Sydney

NOVEMBER 1995
ABSTRACT.

The two Christian conversions of Pandita Ramabai (1858-1922), the first to high Anglicanism and the second to the Holiness Movement are analysed in the light of recent studies in conversion.

Both conversions are set in their historical, cultural and theological contexts.

Ramabai’s background as a Madhva Vaishnava and later as a member of the Brahma Samaj Movement of India is critically examined for its bearing upon her conversions and her conversion accounts. The Community of St Mary the Virgin, its history, culture and role as an advocate in Ramabai’s first Christian conversion is also examined as is the Christian and Missionary Alliance, the institution in which she found her religious fulfilment and to which she left the trusteeship of the Ramabai Muki Mission.

Crucial to Ramabai’s spiritual fulfilment was the role of her father and guru, Anant Shastri Dongre. It is the contention of this work that Anant shaped Ramabai’s formative religious aspirations and goals. Her search for spiritual fulfilment required both the achievement of these goals and the resolution of her departure from her father’s faith. In achieving that resolution Ramabai was able to find a degree of continuity between her faith as a bhakta and as an evangelical.
The Sharada Sadan, which Ramabai established as a non-sectarian school for high-caste widows in Poona, struggled for acceptance in a climate of suspicion and nationalist ferment fostered by B. G. Tilak. Her difficulty in maintaining the secularism of her school owing to her changing religious perspectives is the context for her second Christian conversion. The socio-cultural and theological background of the Holiness Movement, its emphasis on religious experience and charismatic gifts in association with the baptism of the Holy Spirit, as well as its expectations of the imminence of the Parousia, provide the context for the religious revival which erupted in India in 1905. The revival at Muktí and the characterization of the Ramabai Muktí Mission as a mission conducive to those of Holiness and Pentecostal persuasions completes the analysis of Ramabai’s spiritual transitions from Vaishnavism to Brahmoism, high Anglicanism to Evangelicalism. The work concludes with a literary analysis of Ramabai’s narrative, "The Blessing of the Guru" and the bearing it had on the resolution of her departure from Vaishnavism.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.

I would like to thank Mother Allyn, Mother General of the Community of St Mary the Virgin, Wantage; Miss Heather Johnstone, Superintendent of the Pandita Ramabai Muki Mission, Kedgaon, and Miss Enid Castle, Principal of The Cheltenham Ladies College, Cheltenham for allowing me access to valuable archival material in their possession.

My thanks also to the following librarians and archivists in England, India and Australia, for their assistance in obtaining essential material.

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Mrs Janet Johnstone, Librarian, The Cheltenham Ladies’ College, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire.
Dr. P. M. Doll, Pusey House, Oxford.
Ms Christina Mackwell, Lambeth Palace Library.
The British Library.
The Church of England Record Centre, London.
Fisher Library, University of Sydney.
The Christian and Missionary Alliance, Colorado Springs.

A number of people have rendered valuable assistance with translation work. I would like to thank Mrs Kamini Parashar for her translation from Marathi into English of Ramabai’s Voyage to England. And particular thanks must go to Father Eric Symonds of The Community of the Resurrection and Sister Dorothea of the Sisters of the Church for deciphering the handwriting of Bishop Charles Gore, which was no mean task.
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Sister Sara Grant and Sister Brigitta of the Christa Prema Seva Ashram, Poona.

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This work has been done under the supervision of Professor Eric J. Sharpe of The School of Studies in Religion, The University of Sydney. His expertise and encouragement have been greatly appreciated. Always generous with his time, as well as his library, he has proved to be a good companion throughout the writing of this work. My thanks must also go to Dr Geoff Oddie of the Department of History, University of Sydney for giving generously of his time, and particularly for some very sound criticism and advice in the preparatory writing stage. I have also been deeply appreciative of the assistance of Mr Keith Burns, whose editorial skills have enabled this work to see the light of day.

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DEDICATION

To Peter, and to my parents, Marjorie and Jim Turner.

"Truly, truly I say unto you, unless one is born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, "You must be born anew." The wind blows where it wills and you hear the sound of it, but you cannot tell whence it comes or wither it goes; so it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit."

The Gospel of John, Chpt 3.6. (R.S.V.)
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**LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

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<tr>
<td>C.M.S.</td>
<td>The Church Missionary Society.</td>
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<tr>
<td>C.S.M.V.</td>
<td>The Community of St Mary the Virgin, (Wantage).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R.S.V.</td>
<td>The Bible, Revised Standard Version.</td>
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<td>S.S.J.E.</td>
<td>The Society of St John the Evangelist.</td>
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Chapter 1: The Baptism

Introduction.

The church bells from the medieval limestone tower of the parish church of Saint Peter and Saint Paul of Wantage joyfully proclaimed the news on September 29th 1883 that Pandita Ramabai Dongre Medhavi, a Brahmin widow, had been baptized and received into the Church of England. Her baptismal name was Mary Rama. Her daughter, Manoramabai was baptized Manorama Mary. The officiating priest was Canon William Butler, later Dean of Lincoln, founder of the Community of St Mary the Virgin (CSMV).1 The sponsors of mother and child were drawn in the main from religious with well established links with India. Sister Geraldine, a godmother to Ramabai, had served at Poona with the CSMV, as had also Sister Elizabeth, while Mother Harriet, as Mother-Superior of the CSMV had been deeply involved with the mission in India. Father Page, Father General of the Society of St John the Evangelist (S.S.J.E.), who had lately returned to England to raise funds for the Poona Mission stood as Ramabai’s godfather.2 Manoramabai’s godparents were Sisters Emily, Mary and Agnes and the Rev Thomas Henry Archer Houlon.3

News of Ramabai’s baptism was telegraphed to Poona and to Bombay immediately. The Sisters of the Panch Howd Mission were, as Mother Harriet exclaimed, eagerly waiting to say their Te Deums.4 But there was no joy to be

1 One Hundred Years of Blessing within an English Community. Recorded by the Community of St Mary the Virgin, Wantage, S.P.C.K. London 1946 pp 1–2.
2 July 1, 1883 Monthly Letters of the CSMV, CSMV Archives, Wantage.
3 1st Oct 1883, Monthly Letters of the CSMV. Sister Emily Salome affectionately known as "Bear" went to India in 1890 but illness brought her back to England in 1891 where she died. Unpublished note from the Notebooks of Sister Geraldine on the bottom of a letter Geraldine received from Miss Hamlin of the Ramabai Association, August 17, 1890. For the letter see Letters and Correspondence of Pandita Ramabai, compiled by Sister Geraldine of the C.S.M.V., (ed) A. B. Shah, Maharashtra State Board of Literature and Culture, Bombay, 1977 pp 255–258. Henceforth this work will be referred to as Letters and Correspondence.
found in the Indian press reports; there Ramabai was castigated. Indeed the depth of feeling expressed in Maharashtra at the time was such that if her conversion had occurred in India her life would have been in danger.⁵ For some Hindus Ramabai’s conversion was another blatant example of British imperialism, for others proof that women were unreliable and unsuitable for education.⁶

Everywhere the question being asked was, Why? The opinion amongst the educated, both Hindu and Christian, which at the time gained the most currency was that she had given up all hope that the Hindu Reform Movement would give her any practical support in her plan to assist high caste Hindu women.⁷ It was an opinion Ramabai later confirmed in her letter to the Editor of the London Times, of the 27th September 1887.⁸ Some suggested that the reformers talked too much but did very little and consequently Ramabai had become frustrated.⁹ There was some truth in public opinion. In a speech in Boston, in 1887, Ramabai confirmed her frustration with the reform process in India by referring to "enlightened men" who gave many speeches on female education but who failed to practise what they preached.¹⁰ Conversion to

⁴ Monthly Letters of the CSMV. Oct 1 1883.
¹⁰ Ramabai, "New Proposals for the Education of High Caste Hindu Widows" an address given in Boston, March 28 1887 at the home of Reverend Joseph and
Christianity was therefore an advantage in many ways to Ramabai. It provided her with access to powerful and influential people who supported and promoted her work. It drew her into an extensive, philanthropic, trans-Atlantic network comprised of the Women's Christian Temperance Union, (W. C. T. U.), the Women's Suffrage Movement, the Women's Foreign Mission Movement and the Social Gospel Movement. Important contacts in these networks were crucial to the establishment of the Ramabai Association and consequently to the foundation of both the Sharada Sadan, a home and school for high-caste widows and of the Pandita Ramabai Mukti Mission. Such networks were assisted in their support of Ramabai by the publication in 1887 of her book, The High-Caste Hindu Woman, the introduction to which was written by Professor Rachel Bodley of the Women's Medical College of Pennsylvania. The publication of the book was the

Mrs Cook, published in The Boston Monday Lectures, pp 251 ff (details unknown). Bodley Collection, Mukti Archives.

11 See the editorial, "Pundita Ramabai and the Brahmins", which originally appeared in the Indian Spectator and was subsequently republished in the Bombay Gazette, October 29, 1883. It makes two essential points. Firstly it castigates the Reform Movement for not doing more for Ramabai. Secondly it admits that her conversion was not unexpected because Christians (unlike members of the Brahmo Samaj), were prepared to support her work.

12 In 19th century America associations concerned with the advancement of women were known collectively as the Woman Movement. In England the preferred term was the Women's Movement. See William L. O'Neill, The Woman Movement: Feminism in the United States and England, George Allen and Unwin Ltd, London 1969 p 13.

13 "Pundita Ramabai at Evanston." Union Signal Chicago Illinois, December 1, 1887, High-Caste Hindu Woman Scrapbook; Letter from Ramabai to Mano, dated December 7 1887, Notebooks of Sister Geraldine (no 7); The Ramabai Association Annual Report 1898.

14 The Ramabai Association published subsequent editions of the High-Caste Hindu Woman, but the first edition may well have been published by Rachel Bodley. See The Ramabai Association Annual Report, March 1890, p 32.

15 Rachel Bodley held the Chair of Chemistry and Toxicology in the Woman's Medical College from 1865, and was appointed Dean in 1874. She was a member of various scientific and educational bodies including the Cincinnati Society of Natural History, the New York Academy of Sciences and the American Chemical Society, "Rachel Bodley" The Woman's Tribune, October 18, 1887, Bodley Collection, Mukti. Bodley published The High-Caste Hindu Woman and publicized it
catalyst for a national publicity campaign sponsored largely by the Woman's Christian Temperance Union under the Presidency of Frances Willard, the result of which was the establishment of the Ramabai Circles on a national basis. 16

The Reverend Doctor Edward E. Hale, Unitarian pastor and theologian was the first President of the Ramabai Association. He was well known for his involvement in the Social Gospel Movement and his patronage guaranteed interest and support for Ramabai from among his wide circle of supporters. 17

It was under the auspices of the Unitarian Movement that a provisional committee of the Ramabai Association was organized and a public meeting duly called in Channing Hall. Whilst Hale was subsequently elected President, the committee included members drawn from many Protestant faiths. 18 Hale maintained that he read two important annual addresses, that of the President of the United States, and that of Frances Willard, President of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union. 19 Willard's annual address for the W. C. T. U. was a report not only on the status of the Woman's Movement in the United States but was widely regarded as a barometer of the moral health of the nation. 20

widely amongst the alumni of the women's College, undated circular, High Caste Hindu Woman Scrapbook, Muki Archives.

16 Ramabai worked closely with Frances Willard through 1887 and 1888 attending temperance meetings and touring the Pacific Coast. See the following letters (unpublished) from Ramabai to Mano, July 12, 1887; December 1, 1887; December 7, 1887 from book 3 of the Notebooks of Geraldine; Circular from Frances Willard to the W. C. T. U. July 21, 1887 Muki Archives; "Hindu Child-Widows: An Effort being made to teach them to Read and Write...." The Inter-Ocean, Chicago July 26 1887; "Pandita Ramabai in Evanstown" Union Signal Chicago Illinois, December 1, 1887, High-Caste Hindu Woman Scrapbook; Report of the Executive Committee, Ramabai Association Annual Report, March 1898.

17 Dr Edward Everett Hale, (1822-1909) edited the Unitarian journal, "Old and New" 1870-1875. In 1908 he was elected chaplain to the U. S. Senate, a post he held until his death in 1909. Further information can be found in Who was Who in America, Vol 1 1897-1942, The A. N. Marquis Co, Chicago U.S.A. 1943 p 502.


The W. C. T. U. was the single largest women's organization in America. The size of its constituency was only rivalled by the Farmers' Alliance Movement. Willard was one of the first Vice-Presidents of the Ramabai Association. In the 1880s she was at the height of her fame and popularity. She has been described not only as "America's best known woman" in the late 19th century, but as "the leading lay spokeswoman not only for Methodism but also for Protestant Christianity."

Another Vice-President with enormous influence was the Reverend Dr. Phillips Brooks, liberal Episcopalian theologian who first came to national prominence in 1865 when he preached at the funeral of Abraham Lincoln. Also deeply involved with the Ramabai Association from the beginning was Dr. Lyman Abbott, Congregationalist theologian and writer, editor of Outlook, and a prominent leader of the Social Gospel Movement. In 1897 he was elected Vice-President of the Ramabai Association and in 1894 he was listed in the

[References]

20 Ibid, p 4
21 Ibid, pp 153-154. Patricia Hill, The World Their Household: The American Woman's Foreign Missionary Movement and Cultural Transformation, 1870-1920, University of Michigan Ann Arbor, 1985 p 8, argues that the Woman's Foreign Mission Movement was a larger body, but it was not a single organization as the W. C. T. U.
22 The Ramabai Association Articles of Incorporation and Constitution 1887, Ramabai Mukti Mission. As President of the National Council of Women in 1890 Willard was successful in her appeal for further support for Ramabai's work. See The Ramabai Association Annual Report, March 1891.
23 Bordin, op.cit., p 112.
24 In 1880 Dr Phillips Brooks preached at Westminster Abbey in the presence of Queen Victoria, the first American to preach in the presence of British royalty. In 1891 he was consecrated Bishop of Massachusetts. Charles Van Doren (ed), Robert McHenry (Assoc., Ed) Webster's American Biographies, G. & C. Merriam Co, Springfield Mass, 1974, pp 140-141. See also Who was Who in America, Historical Volume, 1607-1896, Marquis Who's Who Inc., The A. N. Marquis Co, Chicago 1963 p 76. Other contacts made at this time were: Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony and Mary Livermore, leaders of the National Woman's Suffrage Association, all of whom had also been deeply involved in the Abolitionist Movement.
Annual Report as President.²⁵

Nor should Ramabai's English contacts be forgotten. Frances Power Cobbe was very active on Ramabai's behalf in England, particularly through the National Indian Association. ²⁶ Sir William Wedderburn and Hon Lionel Ashburner retired members of the Indian Civil Service both endorsed the establishment of the Ramabai Association and lent their influence to the formation of the Indian Advisory Board.²⁷ Their influence was considerable. Wedderburn spent 27 years with the Government of India and Lionel Ashburner 36 years. Both were committed to the improvement of Indian society through western education. Wedderburn was also sympathetic to the Indian Independence Movement accepting the Presidency of the 4th Indian National Congress. He also acted for the Congress in England upon his retirement from the I.C.S both as a private individual and as a Member of Parliament.²⁸ In many of Ramabai's press interviews in the United States mention was also made of her association with Professor F. Max Müller of the University of Oxford. ²⁹ He provided her with letters of recommendation to various bodies and individuals in the United States.³⁰ His reputation as an orientalist and as one who supported the philanthropic work of the Brahma Samaj, particularly its educational programme

²⁵ The Ramabai Association Annual Report March 12, 1894. For Abbott's theology see the following articles, "The Progressive Movement"; "The Message of the Nineteenth Century to the Men of the Twentieth", in New Outlook 1912, Vol 102, pp 57-59, 349-354. For further information on Abbott see, Who was Who in America, Vol 1, 1897-1942, pp 4-5.
²⁶ See Cobbe's letter to the editor of The Times, October 1, 1887.
²⁷ See the Articles and Constitution of the Ramabai Association, Boston, December 1887, Mukti Archives.
²⁹ "Hindu Child-Widows. An Effort being made to teach them to Read and Write...." The Inter-Ocean, Chicago, July 26, 1887; Child-Widowhood; Horrors of the Status of Women in India," New York Herald, Jan 30, 1888, High-Caste Hindu Woman Scrapbook.
³⁰ See Miss Noble's letter to Sister Geraldine dated February 18, 1886, Book 1, Sister Geraldine's Notebooks, Unpublished correspondence, Mukti Archives.
for women, was widely known in Europe and America. He also publicized the *High-Caste Hindu Woman* through his letter to *The Times* of August 27, 1887 and canvassed support for Ramabai’s work. Max Müller supported Ramabai’s work till the end of his life maintaining that there was never any need of her conversion to Christianity because she had always been a true Christian in spirit.

For many, practical support of this order would in itself have been a sufficient explanation of Ramabai’s conversion. But is it? And why in particular was she a convert to high church Anglicanism? Her first missionary contact was the Baptist missionary, Isaac Allen, whom she met in Dacca in 1881. Also intriguing is the question, Why did she so thoroughly reject the Church of England after only three years? What was the nature of her relationship with Anglicanism and in particular with the Community of St Mary the Virgin that led to this parting of the ways? And what was the motivation for her second Christian conversion? The answers to these questions lie embedded in the details of her life. There were two crucial life experiences which shaped Ramabai’s early religious consciousness and influenced her attitudes towards Anglicanism. These will be discussed in detail since they provide essential background material.

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to her decision to leave the Church of England. The first lay in the sixteen years she spent with her father, Anant Shastri. More than any other single individual he moulded her religious consciousness and aroused in her expectations which ultimately he could not fulfil. The second period of significance was the four years Ramabai spent with the Brahma Samaj Movement. Similarly it too shaped her religious consciousness and aroused her expectations, particularly in respect to female education and equality which it was unable or unwilling to fulfil to her satisfaction. Ramabai therefore, entered the Church of England with a host of expectations particularly in regard to gender and status, along with her formative religious and cultural experiences as a Madhva Vaishnava and as a member of the Brahma Samaj of India. Nor was she alone in her expectations. Others also had their expectations of her such as Canon Butler and Sister Geraldine; Dorothea Beale, Headmistress of The Cheltenham Ladies College; Mrs Gilmore from the Zenaana Bible and Medical Mission; Isaac Allen, the Baptist missionary; Nehemiah Goreh and Father Page from the Society of St John the Evangelist and of course members of the Brahma Samaj Movement. The dynamics generated by so many people's varied hopes and plans will be shown to have played a significant role in Ramabai's difficulties with the Church of England from 1883 to 1886. In the 1890s Ramabai was converted to charismatic Evangelicalism. In my analysis of Ramabai's spiritual fulfilment through her second Christian conversion I have been guided by her disappointments with both Anglicanism and the Brahma Samaj. The work therefore falls clearly into three sections. The first will explore the importance of Ramabai's background and the events leading up to her baptism into the Church of England; the second will examine the events of 1883-1886 which led to her rejection of the Church of England and the third will draw on Ramabai's charismatic experiences between 1893 and 1906 and the contribution they made to her spiritual fulfilment.
The Hunter Education Commission

Prior to her arrival in England, Ramabai had appeared before the Hunter Education Commission in Poona in 1882. This event clearly demonstrated her indebtedness to her father Anant Shastri Dongre, as well as her own commitment to the education of women in India. It is therefore a good introduction to Ramabai's central concerns as well as important documentary evidence of their connection with Anant Shastri. Ramabai was asked to address the Commission on the subject of female education. She was one of the few women asked to supply evidence before it and doing so enhanced her reputation.34

Ramabai had developed a wide network of influential contacts since becoming a Brahmo in 1878 and was well known to Dr William Hunter, President of the Commission, who had heard her lecture in Benares.35 Another influential contact, who may well have first brought Ramabai to Hunter's attention, was the Hon Lionel Ashburner of the Indian Civil Service, who had chaired many of Ramabai's lectures on women's education.36

Ramabai made a number of recommendations to the Education Commission including the need for female inspectors in schools, who would be less

34 Another high caste woman selected to address the Commission appeared before the Commission in October 1882. India's Women, Letter dated 16-25th May 1882 from Mrs Kearns to the editor. September - October 1882, Vol 2, No 11 p 300.
35 Padmini Sengupta, Pandita Ramabai Saraswati: Her Life and Her Work, Asia Publishing House, London 1970, p 95. W. W. Hunter, was an Indian civil servant and historian. In 1869 Glasgow University awarded him the L.L.D. In 1871 he became Director-General of statistics to the Government of India and in 1881 edited the first Imperial Gazetteer of India. In the same year he was appointed an additional member of the Governor General's council and in 1882 he accepted the Presidency of the Education Commission. See L Stephen & S Lee (ed) Dictionary of National Biography Vol 22, Supplement, University of Oxford Press, 1917, pp 689-690.
36 See the article, "Ramabai Sanskrita" The Cheltenham Ladies College Magazine, September 1884 p 118. Henceforth referred to as C.L.C.M. See also Sengupta, Pandita Ramabai Saraswati p 122.
prejudiced and therefore less intimidating to female teachers.\textsuperscript{37} She requested higher salaries for women teachers in order to attract the higher castes, and she presented a graphic description of the role of purdah in disadvantaging women from seeking medical help. Most of these requests fell on deaf ears, but the plea for female physicians, not made by her alone, eventually resulted in the Countess of Dufferin’s Movement for female medical aid for the women of India.\textsuperscript{38}

On the other hand the Commission appeared to accept her criticism that in Indian society girls were disadvantaged\textsuperscript{39} by recommending equal funding for girls’ and boys’ schools.\textsuperscript{40}

Ramabai’s appearance before The Education Commission furthered her reputation and brought her to the attention of the British community. Her comments were published at length in the Introduction by Dr Rachel Bodley to Ramabai’s \textit{High-Caste Hindu Woman}. A biographical sketch of Ramabai’s life was printed at the express wish of Dr W. W. Hunter presumably for private circulation in both England and India.\textsuperscript{41} Ramabai’s appearance before the Commission was reported in \textit{The Times of India},\textsuperscript{42} and more interestingly in a missionary journal, \textit{The Indian Female Evangelist}, which was published by

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\textsuperscript{37} Keshub Chunder Sen had made the same suggestion in 1871 possibly through the advice of Mary Carpenter. See Keshub’s 1871 address, "The Improvement of Indian Women" in Meredith Borthwick, \textit{Keshub Chunder Sen: A Search for a Cultural Synthesis}, Minerva, Calcutta, 1977, pp 146-147. Carpenter favoured a more radical curriculum and also the establishment of a normal school for the training of female teachers. See David Kopf, \textit{The Brahmo Samaj and the shaping of the Modern Indian Mind}, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey 1979, p 34.


\textsuperscript{39} Ibid, Introduction, p xviii.

\textsuperscript{40} The result of the Commission was a greater commitment to the implementation of Wood’s Despatch. It particularly recommended more strenuous effort at the primary level. See Y. B. Mathur, \textit{Women’s Education in India 1813-1966}, Asia Publishing House, London pp 8-9, 43, 50-51.

\textsuperscript{41} Bodley, Introduction, p xvi Pandita Ramabai, \textit{High-Caste Hindu Woman}; Sengupta, Pandita Ramabai Saraswati, p 95.

\textsuperscript{42} Ibid, p 98.
the Zenana Bible and Medical Mission. Not only were members of this society interested in Ramabai’s recommendations for female education, but in her plea for women doctors and in her description of the desperate need of Indian women for such a service. They were also very interested in her potential as a convert. In 1883 when Ramabai came to England, among the many women who were waiting for her were members of the Zenana Bible and Medical Mission. Most importantly, Ramabai publicly stated before the Commission that her aims and goals in life were simply a continuation of her father’s work. In so doing she publicly claimed his authority for her own advocacy of female education. She said,

"I am the child of a man who had to suffer a great deal on account of advocating female education and who was compelled to carry out his views amidst great opposition. I consider it my duty to the very end of my life to maintain this cause and to advocate the proper position of women in this land."

It was a bold statement calculated to appeal to a patriarchal society. Nor would Maharashtrian society be unaware of her father’s reputation and commitment to female education from the 1840s to his death in 1874. His had been a radical stance and one for which he suffered persecution in a society, which for all its religious and social complexity shared the opinion that education for women was if not dangerous, certainly a waste of time.

It had been largely due to the influence of missionaries and humanitarians that schools were opened for girls in India. Although the first day school for girls opened in 1807, caste prejudice and religious fears meant that

43 In 1880 the Indian Female Normal School and Instruction Society separated into two organizations: The Church of England Zenana Missionary Society and the Zenana Bible and Medical Mission. The latter produced the journal, The Indian Female Evangelist, the former, India’s Women.
44 Indian Female Evangelist, April 1883, Vol 2, no 46; pp 49-53.
45 Ibid.
47 Ramabai, High-Caste Hindu Woman p 103; Sengupta Pandita Ramabai Saraswati p 30.
student numbers were very small.\textsuperscript{48} The early marriage age for females was also a formidable barrier to education. This was particularly true of high caste girls. In 1849 J.E Drinkwater Bethune, President of the Council of Education and member of the Governor-General’s Council, opened his school for girls in Calcutta.\textsuperscript{49} This was a significant breakthrough in the education of high caste Hindu girls. However those girls who did attend the Bethune schools were by and large from families associated with the reform movements in Bengal, particularly the Brahma Samaj.\textsuperscript{50} The attraction of the Bethune schools for such families lay in their secularity. Christianity was not part of the curriculum.\textsuperscript{51} In the 1840 and 1850s when Ramabai’s father, Anant Shastri Dongre, was advocating female education, the Bethune schools were catering for those few middle class families who were already influenced by contact with the West. Consequently even after a period of 75 years in which missions and philanthropic movements had made concerted efforts in the field of education catering for children from all levels of society, the Education Commission’s Report released in 1889, revealed that more than 90% of the female population were illiterate.\textsuperscript{52}

By contrast, Anant Shastri’s advocacy of female education was

\textsuperscript{48} This was Mrs Hannah Marshman’s Day school for girls at Serampore. Stock, \textit{History of the Church Missionary Society}, Vol 1, CMS London 1899, p 199; Mrs Marcus B Fuller, \textit{The Wrongs of Indian Womanhood}, Oliphant Anderson and Ferrier, Edinburgh and London, 1902 p 255.


\textsuperscript{51} Schools of the "Bethune" type were copied all over India. See Y. B. Mathur, \textit{Women’s Education in India 1813–1966}, Asia Publishing House, London 1973, pp 24–25. Ramabai’s attempt at establishing a secular school, that is the Sharada Sadan, may well have owed its origin to the examples of the Bethune Schools.

\textsuperscript{52} The Report stated that out of a female population of 99,700,00, 99,500,00 were illiterate. Quoted in Ramabai’s \textit{High-Caste Hindu Woman} p 102.
narrow in its conception. It was religious, not secular education that he had in mind. Nor had he any time for Western education. Diligently maintaining his caste purity, he kept his family away from foreign influences which he regarded as contaminating. What he desired for women was an education which would prepare them for Moksa (salvation). To secure that opportunity for his daughter, Anant ensured that Ramabai was educated in the religious heritage of India. When she appeared in Calcutta in 1878 she was therefore a novelty, a Sanskrit scholar of the Puranas.

No assessment of Ramabai's conversion to Christianity can be made without understanding her religious background and particularly her relationship with her father, which was not only that of a daughter, but of a disciple. This relationship proved to be the mainstay of her spiritual journey through various religious affiliations. Throughout these transitions, as we shall see, there were two consistent goals in her life which had their origins in Anant Shastri's teaching: the first was his commitment to female education, and the second - his search for the ultimate vision of God.

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54 In the Mukti Prayer Bell, March 1904 Ramabai described her education as a Madhva Vaishnava. It included committing to memory large sections of the Bhagavata Purana and the Bhagavadgita, plus an elementary Sanskrit grammar, vocabulary, and dictionary.

Introduction

Pandita Ramabai Dongre Medhavi was born in 1858, the youngest child of Anant Shastri Dongre, a Chitpavan Brahmin and his second wife, Lakshimbai Madhavrao Abhyankar.¹ In her search for spiritual fulfilment, Ramabai explored a number of faiths each of which proved to be, in her own assessment, turning points along the journey towards an undenominational Christian Evangelicalism in which she found fulfilment.² An examination of Ramabai’s religious heritage and particularly her relationship with Anant Shastri, will illustrate that in spite of a number of spiritual transitions in her life, she remained committed to her father’s view that education was essential to the spiritual “uplift” of Hindu women and to the restoration of their Vedic status.³ She was equally committed to his search for the Vision of God.


³ See for example her declaration before the Hunter Education Commission in 1882 that she had dedicated her life to the completion of her father’s work. Subodh—Patrika Vol 51, No 1, 7th May 1922. For the full text see Sengupta, Pandita Ramabai Saraswati pp 38-39.
Anant Shastri Dongre

Anant Padmanabha Shastri Dongre was born either in 1796 or 1786 in the village of Malherambi at the foot of the Western Ghats in the Mangalore district of South Canara. He was a Chitpavan Brahmin, who during his brahmacharya studied first at Shankaracharya's monastery at Shringeri, and then at Poona under a Madhva guru, Ramachandra.

Madhva Vaishnavism is one of the four great traditions of the Vaishnava Bhakti-marga. In the 19th century its adherents were mainly found in South India, particularly Karnataka, but also in parts of the Bombay Presidency, Mysore State, Goa and the western coast. Madhva founded the school of Dvaita Vedanta, which posits, in contradiction to Advaita Vedanta, that reality consists of two eternal principles: God, and the world of matter and souls.

The category of Bheda, or difference forms the basis of the Madhva system. It is firstly an explanation of the perception of difference which the self experiences between itself and all other forms; thus it is quantitative as well as qualitative in its application, and secondly it is one of the two organizing

7 Ibid, p 26.
principles of Dvaitin metaphysics, the other being the category of dependence.\textsuperscript{12} Bheda thus explains and maintains the distinction between entities on the basis of experience.\textsuperscript{13} Therefore, contra to Advaita Vedanta, Madhva believed that the individual soul retains its individuality and its distinction from God even in the state of bliss.\textsuperscript{14} Madhva used the concept of an original and its reflection, (Bimba–pratibimbabhava), to illustrate the nature of the relationship between God and the world as "real" but "unilateral", dependent but distinct.\textsuperscript{15} Yet whilst Madhva taught that the world is essentially distinct and separate from God, he also maintained that it was nevertheless totally dependent upon the divine will for its continuing existence.\textsuperscript{16} Both concepts, difference and dependence, form the corner stones of Dvaitin metaphysics.\textsuperscript{17}

Dvaita Vedanta was not the majority religious persuasion of Chitpavan Brahmins, most of whom were followers of Shankara. Therefore, Anant in choosing a different religious affiliation distanced himself from his caste. He also further isolated himself from both his caste and his sect by taking too radical a stance on the issue of female education.\textsuperscript{18} Ramachandra taught Anant Shastri that women had a higher status in the Vedic Age, an opinion which he substantiated through reference to the Vedas, as well as the Epics and the Puranas.\textsuperscript{19} It was therefore a duty to instruct women in the

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{12} Ramachandran, \textit{Dvaita Vedānta} pp 68-74; Sharma, \textit{Philosophy of Śrī Madhvācārya} pp 94ff.
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid, pp 99-95, 98-101.
\textsuperscript{14} Ramachandran, \textit{op.cit.}, pp 115-119.
\textsuperscript{15} Sharma, \textit{op. cit.}, pp 29-29; Ramachandran, \textit{op.cit.}, 87-90.
\textsuperscript{16} Sharma, \textit{op.cit.}, pp 24-29.
\textsuperscript{17} Ramachandran, \textit{op.cit.}, pp 71-74.
\textsuperscript{18} Ramabai states that the Chitpavans wanted to put her father out of caste when he was 44 years old, around 1840 or 1830 because he announced his intention to educate his second wife, Lakshmibai. Pandita Ramabai, \textit{A Testimony} p 11.
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Epics and Puranas in order that they may learn their own dharma and thus improve their chances of salvation.\textsuperscript{20} The Mahabharata was referred to by Madhva as containing the essence of salvation for women and Shudras.\textsuperscript{21} The Vedas themselves were, as was customary, restricted to high-caste males.\textsuperscript{22} It is not clear whether Anant believed women could achieve ultimate salvation as women, or whether he hoped that through education they would acquire sufficient merit to be reborn as Brahmin males.\textsuperscript{23}


\textsuperscript{20} Mother Harriet to the External Sisters of the CSMV, November 1, 1883, Letters and Correspondence, pp 15-16.

\textsuperscript{21} Hridayananda Dasa Goswami Ācāryadeva, Śrīmad Bhagavatam, Bhaktivedanta Book Trust, Los Angeles 1982, Part 1, Canto 11, 326, p 240.

\textsuperscript{22} Ramabai recalls being rebuked by her father for overhearing a discussion between him and her brother Shrinivas on the Vedas. Ramabai, "Indian Religion" C.L.C.M., No 13, Spring 1886, p 106 ff.

\textsuperscript{23} In spite of the evidence that Ramabai underwent upanayana (initiation) through which she acquired a Vedic education, Anant's failure to provide her with a basis of faith in her own salvation as a woman strongly suggests that he did not believe she could attain release without rebirth. See A Testimony pp 19-22. There was an historical current of criticism amongst bhakti sects against exclusion from salvation based on caste and gender but there is no evidence to show that it had influenced Anant. Thus the Bhagavad Gita states that salvation was accessible to women and Shudras and the Bhagavata Purana is likewise suggestive. See The Song of God: The Bhagavad Gita, translated by Swami Prabhavananda & Christopher Isherwood, Vedanta Press, California, 4th ed, 1987 pp 103-104; Hridayananda dāsa Goswami Ācāryadeva, Śrīmad Bhagavatam. Part 3, Eleventh Canto, Chpt 12, Texts 6-8 pp 127-131, Bhaktivedanta Book Trust, Los Angeles 1972; Hridayananda dāsa Goswami Ācāryadeva, Śrīmad Bhagavatam. Part 5, Eleventh Canto, chpt 25, text 10 pp 8-9, Bhaktivedanta Book Trust Los Angeles 1984. See also R. C. Hazra, Studies in the Puranic Records on Hindu Rites and Customs, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi,
In order to fulfil his guru's teaching and in hope of their ultimate salvation, Anant instructed Lakshmibai, his wife, and subsequently his two surviving daughters, Krishnabai and Ramabai\(^\text{24}\) in Sanskrit and the Puranic literature, an action which resulted in his appearance before two courts of inquiry convened by leading Madhva scholars.\(^\text{25}\) In both courts Anant successfully defended his position, but clearly he did so without the approval of his sect. His reputation as an orthodox Madhva remained intact, but he was isolated as a radical.\(^\text{26}\)

The significance of Ramabai's Madhva background lay in her political and religious inheritance from Anant Shastri. As her guru, Anant initiated her into Madhva Vaishnavism in her ninth year.\(^\text{27}\) Whilst this practice had its roots in the Vedic era, it was a radical departure from the present custom which regarded female education as unnatural.\(^\text{28}\) Perhaps even more controversial was Anant's decision following the disastrous marriage of his daughter, Krishnabai, to reject child marriage as an impediment to the education of women.\(^\text{29}\) Consequently Anant refrained from arranging the marriage of his

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\(^{25}\) Essentially it was Lakshmibai who educated Ramabai. Anant was elderly and not in the best of health. Lakshmibai had also instructed her husband's students at Gangamul. See Macnicol, Pandita Ramabai p 8.

\(^{26}\) There were several years between Anant’s appearance before the Dharma Guru at Shirur Sode and the second at Udipi. Since the family commenced wandering shortly after Ramabai’s birth (1858) the inquiries probably occurred in the late 1840s and early 1850s. See Mother Harriet’s letter to the External Sisters, November 1, 1883, Letters and Correspondence, p 16.

\(^{27}\) Ramabai, A Testimony, p 10-12.


\(^{29}\) Ramabai, A Testimony p 22; Monthly Letters of the CSMV, November 1, 1883, Letters and Correspondence, pp 16-17. The story of Krishnabai's marriage is related fully in Ramabai's book, The High-Caste Hindu Woman.
younger daughter, Ramabai, during the traditional period, an act which brought
him further condemnation. The Manu Samhita likened the marriage of a woman to
the bramacharya of the male. The inference was that as a man is
disciplined and enlightened by his studies, so is a woman through her service to
her husband.\textsuperscript{30} The Vyasa Samhita stipulated that a woman must be married
before puberty, otherwise her father was to be considered "degraded" - a
concept abhorrent to a Brahmin. In disobeying both Manu and the Vyasa Samhita
Anant illustrated the lengths to which he was prepared to go to maintain his
principles as well as the depth of his commitment to Ramachandra.\textsuperscript{31}

In the light of Anant's refusal to arrange Ramabai's marriage and to
allow Krishnabai to return to her husband, the family experienced caste
persecution.\textsuperscript{32} However, the Shastri's reputation was still such that they were
able to pursue their profession as puranikas relatively unhindered.\textsuperscript{33} However,
Anant's practice of allowing his wife and daughters to recite puranas in temple
precincts has continued to puzzle Ramabai's biographers. They have wondered
how he was able to escape censure in such a religiously conservative region as
South India was in the 19th century.\textsuperscript{34} Whilst Anant was able to protect the
family when he was alive, upon his death the surviving members were hounded
out of Madras by conservative factions and the one criticism which constantly
recurred was the offence to Brahmin sensibilities by Ramabai's unmarried

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Philadelphia 1987 pp 62-64. Although Ramabai doesn't identify the person
involved as Krishnabai, the story she relates is only an extension to the above
references to her sister's marriage.

\textsuperscript{30} Manu 1:66 in Marmath Nath Dutt, \textit{The Dharam Shastra : Hindu Religious
Codes}, Cosmo Publications, New Delhi, 1979 Vol 5 p 47

\textsuperscript{31} See the Vyasa Samhita, 2:7 in Marmath Nath Dutt, \textit{The Dharam Shastra
: Hindu Religious Codes}, Cosmo Publications, New Delhi, 1979, Vol 3 p 508; also the
Gautama Samhita Chpt 18, in the above p 700.

\textsuperscript{32} Ramabai, \textit{A Testimony}, p22; \textit{The High-Caste Hindu Woman}, p 63.

\textsuperscript{33} Ramabai states that her father was a generous patron to the temple staff
which may go some way to explaining the anomaly of his position. Ramabai, \textit{A
Testimony} p 14; \textit{The Widows' Friend} p 7.

\textsuperscript{34} Sengupta, op.cit., p 45; Macnicol, op.cit., p 17.
From Anant Shastri Ramabai inherited strong views on the education of women: views which she was able to support through her knowledge of the Puranic literature. Likewise she was committed to raising the status of women to the position she believed they had held during the Vedic Age. She found her heroines in such women as Draupadi and Gargi, women who were honoured for their learning and their wisdom and who exercised a freedom in society unknown to high caste Hindu women of the 19th century. Likewise from Anant she inherited the desire to abolish child marriage which she regarded as an impediment to the education of women and to the progress of society.

This was Ramabai’s political inheritance from Anant Shastri. Her religious inheritance from him lay in his search for the Vision of God.

35 Letter from Mother Harriet CSMV Nov 1, 1883, Letters and Correspondence, p 17.
36 Indian Female Evangelist Vol 2 April 1883, no 46, p 3.
37 Ibid, pp 44–53.
38 Ramabai, "Indian Religion" C.L.C.M. No 13, Spring 1886, pp 106–118; Ramabai, "New Proposals for the Education of high-caste Hindu Widows", An address given on 28th March 1887, Boston, Boston Monday Lectures, Bodley Collection, Multi Archives.
39 Lecture given in Bombay and reported in the Indian Female Evangelist Vol 2 April 1883, no 46 pp 44–53; "Notes of Conversations with Ramabai", C.L.C.M. No 12, Autumn 1895, pp 138–146.
Bhakti

Of the three traditional paths to God in Hinduism: knowledge, service and devotion, the Madhvas as part of the Vaishnava tradition emphasize devotion, (bhakti). The textual source for Madhva devotional practice is the Bhagavata Purana. Madhva defined bhakti as,

"Firm, ceaseless and unshakable love of God, which surpasses every other form of affection and attachment, and which is based on and inspired by a full knowledge of His transcendent majesty, is called Bhakti; by that alone does one attain liberation - by no other means."

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In the Bhagavata Purana, "Nine forms" of devotion are required to be demonstrated by Madhvas. These are:

"Hearing about God, singing about His greatness, remembering Him, serving Him through the service of all beings as His embodiments, worshipping Him in holy images, paying obeisance to Him, practising the attitude of a servant towards Him, cultivating loving intimacy with Him, and surrendering one’s body, mind and soul to Him. A person who offers this ninefold offering of devotion to the Lord, in truth and in spirit is indeed a well-educated person."

41

The role of the Guru

A guru is essential to the practice of bhakti. He is crucial to his disciples’ training.42 In the 19th century initiation into the sect of Madhva involved disfigurement. Whilst other sects, such as the Shri-Vaishnavas, might occasionally mark themselves with the symbols of Vishnu, amongst the Madhvas this was compulsory, as it was necessary for salvation.43 Facial marks were made with earth and charcoal, but the emblems of Vishnu were branded on the

41 Bhāgavata Purāṇa, quoted Svāmi Tapasyānanda, in Bhakti Schools of Vedānta p 187.
42 Sharma, Philosophy of Śrī Madhvacarṇa pp 378-380.
body. Ramabai recalls her initiation in the Mukti Prayer Bell of 1904 describing how a copper stamp was heated for the purpose of branding her with the symbols of the conchshell and discus. The branding signified that the devotee was totally surrendered to Vishnu. The act was performed either by the devotee’s own guru or by the Head of one of the Maths (monasteries) who might make an "episcopal" visition for the purpose. It was the guru therefore, who determined the devotee’s readiness for initiation and who continued to nurture the initiate along the path towards salvation. Amongst Madhvas, the guru is regarded as crucial to the salvation of the faithful. It is he who leads the devotee towards the Vision of God. Obedience to the guru is equated with obedience to God. Therefore, the blessing of the guru is believed to contain immense power.

Madhva Vaishnavism taught that bhakti was an inclusive term involving both knowledge and devotion. Tradition affirms that Madhva himself is the only true exponent of the Bhakti-marga. He is regarded as an avatar of Vayu, the Wind God, and as such a salvific figure for those in need. Madhvas believe that the purpose of Vayu’s incarnation as Madhva in the 12th century

45 Ramabai, The Mukti Prayer Bell March 1904.
48 Ramachandran, op.cit., p 111; Tapasyananda, op.cit., p 195;
C.E. was to restore the correct teaching of Vishnu which had been corrupted by Shankara. Dvaita Vedanta is therefore regarded by its exponents as a necessary corrective to the teaching of Advaita.

Associated with the practice of bhakti, the study of the scriptures and meditation was the practice of austerities (tapas): feats of faith and endurance, sufferings which would demonstrate the depth of the disciple's commitment. Both Anant and his son Shrinivas made very severe demands on their bodies. The family regularly fasted and endured extreme temperatures with little protection. It was also the belief of Madhvas that by such devotion they would earn sufficient merit to release them from the cycle of birth and rebirth in order to enjoy everlasting bliss with Vishnu in Vaikuntha. Pilgrimages to various shrines and sacred streams associated with the gods added to one's merit with some sanctuaries having a reputation for greater power than others.

The Vision of God

The practice of bhakti was intended to culminate in the liberation of the soul from endless transmigrations due to the accumulation of karma. Liberation in Madhva's system was an ecstatic release into the presence of Ishvara, (Vishnu) without loss of individuality or consciousness.

52 Tapasyananda, op.cit., pp 184-185.
53 Ramabai, "Religious Consciousness of the Hindus" Mukti Prayer Bell, Jan 1907, pp 47,50; Adhav, Pandita Ramabai p 74; Macnicol, Pandita Ramabai pp 23-24; Sengupta, Pandita Ramabai Saraswati pp 36-37.
54 eg rigorous fasting was part of Madhva discipline. See Hastings (ed) The Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, Vol 8, p 234.
55 Ramabai details her early life experiences in her article, "Trying to be Saved by Their Own Merit." in Mukti Prayer Bell September 1904; Ramachandran, Dvaita Vedanta p 113.
56 Ramabai, A Testimony p 13.
57 Ramachandran, op.cit., pp 115ff.
this experience during one's lifetime was the goal of every Madhva. This was the vision of God - the Bimbāparokṣa.  

It was the moment in which the devotee experienced a clear and direct vision of God as a result of divine grace. Grace was an important concept in Madhva's teaching. Essentially he taught that whilst the devotee could attract the attention of Ishvara or Vishnu by his devotion (bhakti), ultimately it was an act of mercy, not of obligation, which moved God to release the soul from re-birth. Although the devotee during his sadhanas (spiritual disciplines) might experience a mental realization of God, this was not considered the Vision in Madhva's teaching. Rather the Vision was both an intellectual and emotional experience in which the soul came face to face with God in a moment of illumination. The intensity and duration of the experience varied with the individual, but it was considered a foretaste of the bliss which awaited the chosen (the muktī-yogas), when finally the physical body was spent and the soul entered Vaikuntha. The immediate result of the experience was considered to be liberation from the karma of previous existences, but there were expectations of spiritual and even supernatural powers also associated with it. Anant Shastri clearly expected a literal vision of the gods and subsequent material benefits as a result. The Vision of God was the mutual quest of Anant Shastri and his daughter, Ramabai. It was a gift

58 Sharma, op.cit.,pp 425ff.  
59 Ramachandran, op.cit., p 113; Sharma, Philosophy of Śrī Madhvācārya pp 417ff.; 425ff.  
60 Ibid, pp 417ff.  
61 Tapasyānanda, Bhakti Schools of Vedānta, p 161; Ramachandran, op.cit.,pp 112-114; Sharma, op.cit.,p 417.  
62 Contra, Bhandarkar, Vaisnavism Śaivism and Minor Religious Systems, p 61. It was Ramānuja who described the Vision in terms of mental realization. See Sharma, Philosophy of Śrī Madhvācārya pp 425-429.  
64 This Madhvas describe as the Paripakva-bhakti,"consummate devotion"; the intensity of the experiences being commensurate with the intensity of the religious practices. Tapasyānanda, op.cit., pp 189-190.  
65 Sharma, op.cit.,p 427.  
66 Ramabai, A Testimony p 15.
of grace, a sign of favour towards the devotee who had fully surrendered to the Divine Being in a life of consummate devotion.67 This was the faith into which Anant initiated Ramabai and which bound them together. It was a bond which as will be discussed was modified, but not broken by her religious transitions.

67 Sharma, op.cit.,p 427.
Anant Shastri’s search for the Vision of God dominated the lives of the Dongre family. Following the financial collapse of the ashram at Ganganbal the Dongres set out on an extensive pilgrimage to earn sufficient merit to obtain salvation. 68 During this period the family earned its living as puranikas. 69 In her address of the 30th April 1882 on the occasion of the formation of the Aryan Mahila Samaj, Ramabai described the puranika as the preacher of popular Hinduism. 70

As Anant Shastri aged, his eyesight failed as did his health. He became too old to direct his family’s recitations and as a consequence they were all forced to abandon their profession. 71 Sengupta raises the possibility that Anant might have been a Dasha-Granthish brahmin, one who had studied the ten major religious treatises. 72 Such scholars regarded the acceptance of dakshina (gifts, rewards), to which Brahmans were entitled, to be beneath their dignity. 73 Support for Sengupta’s suggestion can be found in Anant’s refusal to accept charity even when it was a matter of necessity. 74 Ramabai appears to confirm this when she said that her father was very generous in his gifts to the temples he visited, yet he himself would not beg nor permit his family to do so. 75 The first time Ramabai begged for food was in Raichur after the death of Anant Shastri, when her mother was dying. Ramabai recalled the event as traumatic not only because of her mother’s condition but because such acts had been

68 Nov 1, 1883, Monthly Letters of the C.S.M.V., Sister Geraldine, Letters and Correspondence p 15; Ramabai, A Testimony pp 11-14.
70 Address given by Pandita Ramabai, 30th April Poona 1882, Mukti Archives, Kedgaon. See also A Testimony p 13.
71 Ramabai, A Testimony p 15.
72 Sengupta, Pandita Ramabai Saraswati p 51.
73 Ibid, p 52.
74 Ramabai, A Testimony p 15.
forbidden by her father. 76

Whilst the recital of puranas was not work in Anant’s eyes, but rather an act of worship, it was the means by which the family earned its living. When that was no longer possible, Anant resolved to live by faith – to throw himself and his family on the mercy of the gods in the hope that he would be rewarded for his action. 77 For three years, according to Ramabai, they lived in hope, eking out their meagre savings, increasing rather than decreasing their austerities, bound together by Anant’s pursuit of the ultimate vision. The family’s health suffered; Lakshmibai had malaria, Shrinivas was emaciated with fasting, but it was proof of their bhakti. 78

**Tirupati**

In 1874 the Dongres came to Tirupati. Tirumalai and Tirupati on the Vengadaram Hills is an important centre for both Shri Vaishnavas and Madhvas. It is a religious complex encompassing many shrines and temples, undergirded by a myth in which Vishnu’s attraction to the daughter of a local ruler resulted in his decision to make the hills his residence. 79 As a result Vengadaram acquired the reputation of being the intersection between heaven (Vaikuntha) and earth. 80 At such a centre of power it was believed that all sin would be consumed by Sri Venkateswara, the Lord of Tiruvengadham, who was Anant Shastri’s personal

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76 Nalder, "Pandita Ramabai and the Child Widows of India: Two addresses by Mrs Rachel Nalder, Mukti Archives Kedgaon.
80 Ibid, p 43.
god. Anant Shastri's search for purification from sin had brought him to Tirupati some years before. But if the journey was long and the temple charges very expensive, the flower gardens and groves of Tiruvetagadu were believed to have powers of rejuvenation, which in light of Anant's state of health may have provided additional motivation for his journey.

The Great Famine

In 1874 the "severest famine" of the 19th century had commenced in the South of India, although a state of famine was not declared officially until 1876 when the S. W. Monsoon failed. This was in spite of the repeated failure of the N.E. Monsoon from 1873. The famine eventually caused the deaths, directly or indirectly, of some 3.5 million people in the Madras Presidency alone between 1876-1878.

The Dongres were to experience the full horrors of this famine. The financial cost involved in visiting Tirupati destituted the family. It was Anant Shastri's last demonstration of his devotion. His hope was that Sri Venkateswara might reveal himself, or failing that he would at least die in the abode of his god.

The costs involved with visiting a shrine such as Tirupati were considerable. To pay the government of the day as well as to make a profit, the priests taxed the pilgrims heavily. Charges were levied on every possible service provided to the pilgrims and for additional revenue, temple servants were sent out in all directions to gather gifts. In 1831 to view the ceremony

81 Ramabai, "Religious Consciousness of the Hindus" Mukti Prayer Bell Jan 1907, supplement, p 40.
83 Viraghavachari, op.cit., pp 48-49.
of Poolkaub (the washing and anointing of the idol), the cost to the pilgrim was 50 rupees whilst to view the robing of the idol on Thursdays was priced at 60 rupees.88 Perhaps in a time of famine there might have been a decrease in charges, but it is interesting to compare the prices at Tirupati in the 1830s with the wages set by the Madras Government at the famine relief camps in the early 1870s. The Government, at that time, was paying an adult male, wages of two – three annas daily. 89

Crisis and Loss of Faith

With the last of their savings spent the Dongres went into the forest to die.90 This was the context in which Ramabai’s faith in Hinduism was irrevocably shaken. Guided by Anant Shastri the family had cast themselves upon the mercy of God but found no response. Anant, Lakshmibai and Krishnabai died during this period. Ramabai and her brother, Shrinivas, were the only family members to survive.91 Writing of this period several years later, Ramabai made one of the very few public criticisms of her father.92 She wrote that owing to his rigidity where caste was concerned and his emphasis on religious education, none of the family were permitted to consider alternative means of earning a living, such as menial labour. Consequently, neither her brother nor herself were able to save their sister or their parents’ lives.93

Ramabai’s account of this period of her life and particularly her father’s search for salvation has been retrospectively moulded by her own presuppositions as an evangelical. Anant’s spiritual disappointment and indeed

89 Bhatia, Famines in India, pp 46-47.
92 Ibid, pp 6-7.
93 Ibid, pp 6-7.
apparent failure to be rewarded for his faith, in spite of enormous efforts are contrasted in The Widows’ Friend, and in A Testimony with Ramabai’s own spiritual fulfilment within Evangelicalism, and even more pointedly with the success of the Mukti Mission as a faith mission. Therefore, apart from his parental and spiritual roles in Ramabai’s history, Anant Shastri also served his daughter as a literary foil.

In Ramabai’s account of Anant as a noble but misguided individual whose search for God within Hinduism was ultimately doomed, there are, in spite of the passage of years, discernible traces of emotion, particularly anger and frustration. As noted above her father’s caste pride appeared to represent the source of her anger whilst her feelings of helplessness and frustration were chiefly associated with her mother.94 It may well have been that some of Ramabai’s criticism of her father was connected with Lakshmibai’s chronic state of ill health, which undoubtedly had been aggravated by Anant’s ambitions.95

Ramabai’s resolution of these emotions and the events which generated them proved a significant step towards the realization of her own ambitions. Whilst the narrative of the event has been pared to the bone in some cases, the depth of the crisis can be discerned in the significant changes which Ramabai made to her life in the years following the death of Anant. One of the first changes which occurred was that Ramabai and Shrinivas came to accept “secular” employment as a means of survival.96 When they joined the Brahma Samaj of India they learned, contrary to Anant’s opinion, not to despise working for a living even if the work was secular. The Samaj had imbued the notion of work as a means of character building, along with Christian morality from the

94 Ibid, pp 6-7.
95 Ramabai wrote that Lakshmibai had malaria for fourteen years rendering her fever stricken and often delirious several times a month. "An Account of My Early Life" an undated work, Mukti Archives Kedgaon.
96 Ramabai, A Testimony p 16.
West. Both brother and sister subsequently earned their living as itinerant lecturers. Nor did they, unlike Anant, reject the generosity of others.

Whilst it is certain that Ramabai regarded her own work as a spiritual vocation, not unlike that of a puranika, she came to regard work, including menial labour, as necessary for both independence and survival, particularly so for high-caste women. Training women to be independent through teaching them skills whereby they earned their own living became the basis of life both at the Sharada Sadan and at Mukti. The skills the students acquired were not confined to teaching or lace making but included working in the laundry, sweeping and cleaning - work which many high-caste women would have found difficult to accept. According to Sister Geraldine, the sight of high-caste Hindu women sweeping and cleaning was a social revolution in itself.

The occasion which contributed towards a resolution of Ramabai's grief in respect to her mother's death was the Central Provinces Famine of 1896. Ramabai was not helpless in this situation, unlike the "Great Famine" of 1874. Instead she is credited with rescuing a great many people from the Central Provinces. Reflecting on the horrors of the 1896 famine she confided

98 Sengupta, Pandita Ramabai Saraswati pp 119, 122-123, 125
100 Sister Geraldine, Letters and Correspondence pp 360-361.
102 Ibid, p 399.
103 The number rescued during 1896-1897 varies in the sources from 60-500. Not all were permitted to stay at Mukti and those who were not were directed to other missions. See Sister Geraldine's comments in Letters and Correspondence pp 343-345; Letter from Father R. L. Page to Father Congreve, February 5, 1897, the Cowley Evangelist 1897, pp 59-60; Reports by Pandita Ramabai and Judith Andrews in The Ramabai Association Annual Report, March 1897; "Press Tribute to Pandita Ramabai" A Testimony pp 51-52; Macnicol, Pandita Ramabai pp
to her daughter, Manoramabai, that it had been the memory of her mother's
death which had been the inspiration for her involvement.¹⁰⁴

The proposition that the deaths of members of her family in the famine
of 1874 was the immediate cause of Ramabai's crisis of faith appears on the
face of it to be contradicted by Ramabai's own statement in "Notes of
Conversations with Ramabai" in the C.L.C.M., September 1884. There she
maintained that her disillusionment with Hinduism was the result of her growing
awareness of its moral bankruptcy. Whilst she willingly accorded a high spiritual
status to the Upanishads, she was particularly critical of Hindu mythology and
the immoral exploits of avatars such as Krishna.¹⁰⁵ She also expressed
disquiet concerning the moral laxity of various other gods and goddesses in Hindu
mythology, drawing parallels between their behaviour and the low standards of
moral behaviour in society.¹⁰⁶ In fact she questioned whether Hinduism had any
moral basis at all.

Ramabai's reference to Krishna's exploits raises the possibility that at
least some of her criticism stemmed from Madhva disapproval of sexuality in the

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95-98; Mary Lucia Bierce Fuller, The Triumph of an Indian Widow, American
Council for the Ramabai Mukti Mission Pennsylvania 1928, pp 44-45. See also
Extract from "My Famine Experiences" by Ramabai, published in the Cowley
Evangelist, 1900 and reprinted in Pandita Ramabai: A Life of Faith and Prayer
by R. K. Dongre & J. E. Patterson, Christian Literature Society, Madras 1963 pp
19-22. Dennis, Christian Missions and Social Progress p 247. suggests the figure
of 500 but his information on Ramabai is not always reliable. See p 244

¹⁰⁴ Ramabai, The Widows' Friend, p 1; Sister Geraldine, Letters and
Correspondence p 395; Article by Ramabai in the Bombay Guardian 1897 (date
unknown) possibly "My Famine Experiences", referred to by Sister Geraldine in
Letters and Correspondence p 344. Sister Geraldine states that the article was
subsequently reprinted as a pamphlet for private distribution by the CSMV;
"Press Tribute to Pandita Ramabai" A Testimony p 51.

¹⁰⁵ Madhvas were particularly critical of sexual aspects of the North Indian
Krishna cult. See, Sir R. G. Bhandarkar, Vaisnavism Saivism and Minor Religious

¹⁰⁶ "Notes of Conversations with Ramabai" the C.L.C.M., no 10 September 1884,
170ff
North Indian worship of Krishna. For Madhvas the stories of Krishna and Radha were not only morally offensive but were equally repugnant by their suggestion of possible intimacy between human and divine entities.\textsuperscript{107} The stories, with their analogy of spiritual union ran counter to Madhva metaphysics in which the existential chasm between God and the Jiva (individual soul) is not obliterated even in the state of bliss.\textsuperscript{108} Yet Ramabai’s criticisms did not focus exclusively on Krishna but also included a variety of members from the Hindu Pantheon thus creating the suspicion that her remarks in this article had more recent origins than she suggested. Evidence in support of such a conclusion arises from her comment that the behaviour of Hindu avatars was not of a sufficiently high standard to “take the manhood up to God”. It is a remark which closely resembled Keshub Chunder Sen’s theology of divine humanity in which he argued that the purpose of an incarnate such as Jesus was to illustrate the divine potentiality of the human race.\textsuperscript{109} Keshub did not disagree with the tradition that the purpose of incarnations was to restore the moral order (dharma); however he assessed the nature of that moral order predominantly in Christian terms, believing that the one salvific figure who had been beyond moral reproach was Jesus Christ.\textsuperscript{110} Similarly, Ramabai’s reference to the inability of Hinduism to provide any inspiration for overcoming temptation was an observation suggestive of a Christian influence either through the Brahma Samaj or through

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item[107] Sharma, Philosophy of Śrī Madhvācārya pp 391-394. Sturrock claimed that the rumours of Christian influence on Madhva morality were due to the high moral code of the sect. See J Sturrock, South Canara, Madras District Manuals, Vol 1 Madras 1894 p 147.
\item[108] S. Tapasyananda, Bhakti Schools of Vedānta, pp 145,189; T. P. Ramachandran, Dvaita Vedānta p 115. See Madhva’s criticism of the eroticism of Tamil Vaishnavism, Sharma, Philosophy of Śrī Madhvācārya pp 392-393.
\item[110] Sen, Jesus Christ, Europe and Asia" "India Asks, Who is Christ" Lectures in India, pp 5-7, 372ff.
\end{enumerate}
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her subsequent Christian studies.111

Ramabai's arguments for her rejection of Hinduism in "Notes of Conversations with Ramabai" were I suggest, not explanations for the loss of her ancestral faith but rather cogent reasons for her conversion to Brahmoism. The two events were not synonymous. In her article she argued that her reasons for rejecting Hinduism were due to brahmanical oppression of women and Shudras, that is, caste and gender oppression.112 Specifically she said,

"We saw the Brahmins claiming to be special favourites of heaven, and trampling upon the Sudras, because of inferior caste - keeping women in servitude, and refusing them the use of those powers with which they had been endowed by nature, yet leading evil lives, punishing cruelly those who disobeyed their arbitrary laws, yet breaking moral laws." 113

In the same article she also mentioned that the inappropriateness of Hindu deities as moral role models was a further cause of her disaffection with Hinduism. These were issues closely associated with the Brahma Samaj Movement. It had incorporated ideals such as universal "brotherhood," and the abolition of caste into its foundation charter, whilst its admittance of females to full membership of the Samaj and its commitment to their education was well known.114 And whilst she had been aware of gender and caste oppression, these issues in themselves had not been sufficient to drive her from Hinduism as her subsequent wanderings with Shrinivas proved. Rather the evidence suggests that the moral critique of Hinduism put forward by Ramabai had been shaped by her education within the Brahma Samaj, although that is not to deny that it had roots in earlier experiences. The article therefore provides a number of cogent

111 The influence of Protestant Christianity, liberal and evangelical, upon Keshub Chunder Sen is well documented. For example see P. C. Mazoomdar, Keshub Chunder Sen, Thacker, Spink and Co, Calcutta 1891 pp 58,216-218; Meredith Borthwick, Keshub Chunder Sen, pp vii-viii; 8-9, 22.
112 Ramabai, "Notes of Conversations with Ramabai" C.L.C.M. No 10, September 1894 pp 120-121.
113 Ibid, p 120.
114 Majumdar, Keshub Chunder Sen pp 118-119.
reasons for Ramabai's conversion to Brahmoism but it glosses over the event of her parents' death. The one connection it makes with that event was her reference to her sixteenth year as her moment of spiritual crisis. That year was 1874. Thus the source preserves the connection between the tragic events of the famine and Ramabai's faith crisis.

The influence of the Brahmo Samaj is discernible in other writings of Ramabai during this period. In a separate article, "Indian Religion" written in 1886, she argued that popular Hinduism was largely superstitious and the result of brahmanical corruption of a higher revelation preserved in the Vedas.\textsuperscript{115} She argued this point consistently during her years in England and America, pointing to alterations in the textual sources, the effect of which had been to increase the power and privileges of Brahmins, particularly at the cost of women and Shudras.\textsuperscript{116} The idea that women had been accorded a higher status in the Vedic Age had been implicit in the teaching of Anant Shastri, and Ramabai's study of the Vedas and Shastras through her association with the Brahmo Samaj brought additional confirmation.\textsuperscript{117} The Brahmo Samaj in particular had promoted the Vedic ideal as a justification for raising the status

\textsuperscript{115} Ramabai, "Indian Religion" C.I.C.M., No 13, Spring 1886, pp 106-118. She quoted approvingly from Sir Monier Monier Williams' work, Religious Thought and Life in India, agreeing with him that Christians must not regard their religion as the sole depository of truth. She also enlisted the authority of F. Max Müller in her claim for the essential monotheism of the Vedas. See "Indian Religion", C.I.C.M. Spring 1886, pp 106-118.

\textsuperscript{116} Ibid. See also The High-Caste Hindu Woman, pp 73-81.

\textsuperscript{117} Ramabai, A Testimony, pp 18-22. The High-Caste Hindu Woman, pp 73-75; 79.

of women. It attributed the fall of Vedic civilisation and the lowering of the status of women to the impact of Islam, which was a view Ramabai also espoused. By 1907, with the publication of "Religious Consciousness of the Hindus", Ramabai was no longer keen to defend the Vedas, regarding them as little more than a source of romantic attraction for western devotees and misguided nationals. After her conversion to Evangelicalism she came to dismiss all other claims to spiritual truth as invalid.

The influence of The Brahma Samaj surfaced in another work of Ramabai's from the same period, Voyage to England. In that work, written prior to and during her conversion to Christianity, she commented upon Roman Catholic images in the Church at Malta. Her remarks reflected a typical Protestant attitude to religious statues consonant with an education in the Brahma Samaj. She wrote,

"On all sides of the church there were many statues showing Mary, Joseph and Christ in different situations. Like other idol worshippers, Roman Catholics worship Christ's idol. The only difference is that they worship only the idols of Christ and Mary whereas others make idols of various gods and worship them."

This attitude to Christian images was not shared by the

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119 Speech by Pandita Ramabai at the home of Ananda Mohan Bose 1876, recorded in Vaidya's "Before Coming to Maharashtra and Afterwards" a supplement to Voyage to England by Pandita Ramabai, pp 32-33.

120 Sister Geraldine, Letters and Correspondence, p 422.


particularly as a statue of the Virgin graces the Community's Mother House at Wantage.

In the light of Ramabai's comments in her *Voyage to England*, which was compiled from notes written prior to her baptism, it would not be prudent to discount the influence of the Brahmo Samaj in her publications during this period. It is a factor which again arises in "Notes of Conversations with Ramabai" in which she clearly inferred that Anant Shastri was a theist. For although Madhvas are often described as theists because they worship Vishnu as the supreme deity, the presence of lesser deities in the Madhva pantheon compromised such a claim in the eyes of Brahmos and Christians, as Ramabai well knew. Yet the Madhva attitude to the worship of images is that they are not divine but conduits of cosmic power and as such worthy of worship, thus Shrinivas' personal god was Hanuman and Lakshmibai worshipped her namesake through the tulsi bush. In fact to worship images was proof of one's bhakti although the devotee was instructed to distinguish the essence of God from its representation. Sources of cosmic power were not confined to images but included streams and rivers, mountain ranges and celestial powers. Therefore whilst Vishnu might be the ultimate source of all power in Madhva cosmology, the proliferation of so many possible conduits of power led devotees, in Ramabai's opinion, either to polytheism or pantheism.

124 "Notes of Conversations with Ramabai" C.L.C.M. no 10 Sept 1894, pp 120 121; Cf "Religious Consciousness of the Hindus" Part 2, pp 40ff for a description of the Dongre family's worship of images.
127 Tapasyānanda op.cit., pp 192-193; Sharma, op.cit.,pp 397-398.
In her first autobiographical piece, distributed by the Community of St Mary the Virgin, Ramabai stated that she changed her religion from Hinduism to Theism, that is, Brahmoism, and then finally to Christianity. The terms could not be misconstrued. In describing her transition from Hinduism to Theism, Ramabai acknowledged her departure from a polytheistic religion to a theistic one. But in a contradictory note she stated in "Notes of Conversations with Ramabai" that she and her family had always been theists.

The conflict in the sources can be resolved by an analysis of the differing audiences for whom they were written. Two major sources are in conflict: "Notes of Conversations with Ramabai" and A Testimony written in 1907. Although A Testimony is an evangelical tract, which could have been expected to dwell on the "sinfulness of idolatry" and to contrast the moral standards of Hindu incarnates with Jesus Christ, it does not do so. On the contrary A Testimony reserved its harshest comments for the degradation of women under Hinduism. In this work, Ramabai judged Hinduism as essentially immoral on the basis of its treatment of women. As a result A Testimony is as much a political statement on the superior status of women within Christianity as it is a celebration of spiritual fulfilment. In the first section of this work Ramabai described her political and intellectual awakening to the power of Christianity to liberate her as a woman. In the second part she described her spiritual awakening and deepening faith as a person.

In contrast, "Notes of Conversations with Ramabai" had an altogether different purpose. This interview was intended to introduce Ramabai to the Cheltenham Community and undoubtedly Dorothea Beale, the headmistress of

130 Mother Harriet to the External Sisters, November 1, 1883, Sister Geraldine, Letters and Correspondence, p 18.
Cheltenham Ladies College, played a large part in its publication. Ramabai had just been appointed to the staff of the Cheltenham Ladies College as "Professor of Sanskrit.\textsuperscript{133} There was an understandable concern on her part to convey an impression to the College and the wider community that she was neither uneducated nor uncivilised. Hinduism, as she later wrote, was synonymous with superstition in popular opinion.\textsuperscript{134} It well may be this factor which led her to distance herself from images associated with the popular cults. As a Brahmo and subsequently as a Christian she rejected the worship of images as idolatry. Furthermore, in her statement before the Hunter Education Commission Ramabai had firmly placed Anant Shastri in the centre of those seeking to reform Hinduism by claiming his authority for her life's work. It is understandable therefore that she would have wished to commend him as much as possible to the Cheltenham College community. By disassociating Anant from popular Hindu religious culture and presenting him as an enlightened theist that aim would have been achieved. Therefore the suspicion arises that Ramabai's account of her earlier life given in "Notes of Conversations with Ramabai" was consciously shaped to associate herself and her family more closely with the higher teachings of the Vedas and less so with the popular cultus. Consequently her recollections in this interview are not totally reliable while its very brevity urges caution. Certainly the reasons given by her for her rejection of Hinduism were found to be misleading in the same work.

\textsuperscript{133} Dorothea Beale to Ramabai, May 22nd 1884, \textit{Letters and Correspondence}, p 40.

\textsuperscript{134} Ramabai, "Indian Religion" \textit{CJC M}, Spring 1886 pp 106–118.
Our discussion of the sources, specifically, "Notes of Conversations with Ramabai" and A Testimony has revealed that the latter is a more reliable source for Ramabai’s religious affiliations in that it preserves the chronology of the major events in her transition from Madhvaism to Evangelicalism. Its weakness lies in its tendency to contract events not relevant to the author’s evangelistic purpose. As a public document there is still a conscious desire on the part of the author to present everyone associated with herself in the best possible light. Criticisms are therefore minimal and when made need to be taken more seriously. As has already been noted, Anant Shastri’s pursuit of merit was criticized by Ramabai. Although the Protestant polemic against merit as the means of salvation is undoubtedly assumed, Ramabai’s focus is predominately pragmatic. Her criticism centred around Anant’s failure to give permission to his children to beg for food or to allow Shrinivas to accept secular employment as a means of ensuring their survival during the famine.¹³⁵ As a result, whilst Anant was proving his bhakti to the gods at the cost of himself, his wife and his daughter, he was also sowing the seeds of doubt in Ramabai’s mind. For in spite of keeping caste rules and storing up merit, the Hindu Gods were silent when they were most needed. In A Testimony Ramabai made it very clear that her disappointment with Hinduism was due to the failure of the gods to honour their bhakti. After the death of their parents and Krishnabai, Ramabai and Shrinivas continued the only way of life they knew. Ramabai wrote,

"I cannot describe all the sufferings of that terrible time. My brother and I survived and wandered about, still visiting sacred places, bathing in rivers, and worshipping the gods and goddesses, in order to get our desire. We had fulfilled all the conditions laid down in the sacred books, and kept all the rules as far as our knowledge went, but the gods were not pleased with us, and did not appear to us. After years of fruitless service, we began to lose our faith in them and in the books which prescribed this course, and held out the

¹³⁵ Ramabai, The Widows’ Friend pp 6-7
hope of a great reward to the worshippers of the gods." 136

A Testimony preserves the link between the famine and Ramabai’s loss of faith. In addition, the above passage described her loss of faith as gradual. Whilst other aspects of Ramabai’s recollections in "Notes of Conversations with Ramabai" have been criticized it has been noted that the work refers to her sixteenth year as the turning point in her rejection of Hinduism. Before concluding that the famine was the decisive event, one other possibility should be considered which is North India. Sengupta believed that this event was a contributing factor to the Dongre’s loss of faith. 137

North India

During their wanderings in the North, Shrinivas and Ramabai investigated an incident in which the local priests at Revalsar were obtaining money from devotees under false pretences. The crowd was informed that seven hills moving effortlessly in a sacred lake were seven great sages and only those who had sufficient merit would be allowed near the lake to worship them. Very early one morning and unbeknown to the priests, Shrinivas swam out to the “hills” and discovered they were composed of grass and soil constructed upon rafts. At certain times of the day these rafts were pulled by ropes carried by temple employees swimming alongside. From a distance the hills appeared to glide and any movement in the direction of a group of worshippers, (presumably those who had paid well) was taken as a mark of divine favour.

Shrinivas’ demonstration that the supernatural phenomena was fraudulent, was not I suggest crucial to either his or Ramabai’s loss of faith, rather the incident indicates that a certain amount of cynicism towards supernatural phenomena was already present in their attitudes indicative of a loss of confidence in their previous belief system. This analysis gains support

136 Ramabai, A Testimony p 16.
137 Sengupta, op.cit, p 61
from Ramabai’s recounting of this event in "Religious Consciousness of the Hindus". In that work the event at Revalsaar was only one story amongst many.138 Whilst "Religious Consciousness of the Hindus" reflects the cynicism of a Christian tract against heathenism there is no indication that the incident in North India was important to her own pilgrimage or even to that of her brother. But it was one more incident, one more confirmation of systemic corruption. On the other hand when she relates her own spiritual journey in A Testimony Ramabai brings her early life to a climax with the events of 1874. Her subsequent narrative of her wanderings with Shrinivas appear only to justify a faith already well in the process of disintegration.

The major factor precluding the conclusion that the famine was indeed the catalyst for Ramabai’s disillusionment with Hinduism has been her own statement that a growing awareness of a lack of moral standards within the Hindu tradition was the reason for her rejection of her childhood faith. In assessing that statement evidence has been presented from various sources to demonstrate overlaying Christian and Brahmo influence in this recollection. Alternatively, there is considerable evidence to show that inspite of such influences the sources maintain the connection between her crisis of faith and the tragic events of 1874, particularly in the recurrent references to her sixteenth year. Furthermore the significant changes which Ramabai introduced in her life following the death of her father also bear out the traumatic effects of that event. Her subsequent rejection of Anant Shastri’s preoccupation with religious education to the detriment of preparing his children for secular employment and her commitment to the Central Provinces famine as a memorial to her mother were both discussed. Most importantly for Ramabai and Shrinivas the events of that period resulted in a change of consciousness. It was as Ramabai recalled, a gradual change, but a radical one. They lost their faith in

miracles, in supernatural phenomena, and under the guidance of the Brahmo Samaj exchanged their previous belief system for one they regarded as more rationally grounded. As we shall see, it was a position Ramabai was to hold until her second Christian conversion.

Chapter 3: Ramabai and The Brehmo Samaj of India

Shrinivas Shastri Dongre was eight years older than Ramabai. As the elder brother, he became the head of the family on the death of Anant Shastri. The relationship between sister and brother was very traditional and Ramabai was expected to defer to Shrinivas’ judgement at all times. Their four years of pilgrimage following the death of Anant Shastri was, I suggest, predominantly due to Shrinivas’ attempt to maintain his loyalty to his father’s faith in spite of his growing doubts. It was an attempt which ultimately failed. During this period Ramabai came in for enormous criticism and indeed persecution because of her unmarried status. Shrinivas, as was customary, assumed a parental role in the relationship, protecting Ramabai from criticism and harm. The search for spiritual fulfilment and reward had dominated the lives of the Dongre family and indeed had endowed their sufferings with meaning. The loss of faith for Ramabai and Shrinivas was therefore not only a loss of certainty but perhaps more importantly a loss of purpose and identity. Hans Mol aptly described the psychology of such an experience as,

"...the never-never situation of meaninglessness and anomie. The individual is neither here nor there. Old beliefs and orientations are on the verge of vanishing and a new focus of identity has not yet taken its place...."

"This period of indecision and instability is highly disturbing and disconcerting. Confusion increases suggestibility."

1 See for example the account of the engagement of Ramabai to Bipin Behari Das Medhavi. *Subodh Patrika*, 17th November 1882 quoted in Sengupta, Pandita Ramabai Saraswati p 73; "Notes of Conversations with Ramabai", C.L.C.M., Sept 1884, p 121. For a description of the esteem in which the eldest brother was held, see *The Life of Keshub Chunder Sen* Thacker, Spink & Co., Calcutta 1891, pp 58-59 by P. C. Mazoomdar who recalled that as young men, he and Keshub credited Nobin Chunder Sen "with natural omniscience."


3 It was rumoured that Ramabai may have been "devoted" at birth and consequently a prostitute. Macnicol, *Pandita Ramabai* pp 34-35, 53.

At this point Ramabai and Shrinivas were psychologically prepared to be redirected in life. I suspect that in their wanderings they came in contact with members of the Brahmo Samaj of India. The Samaj engaged in prosletizing, adopting Christian missionary methods to increase its membership. For this purpose it administered a mission department, employed full time missionaries and ran newspapers, schools and charities. Periodically it conducted major missionary tours as in 1866-1868 and 1879. However many branches of the Samaj were founded by ordinary members as a result of transfers connected with their employment. By the 1870s the result of such missionary activity was the establishment of branches of the Brahmo Samaj and or associated organizations throughout Assam, Bengal, Maharashtra and the Madras Presidency.

In 1869 there had been a mass conversion to Brahmoism of some 5,000 members of the Billawa caste in Mangalore. Although the figures have subsequently been questioned, they indicate something of the attraction of the Samaj for many wanting to escape the confines of Hinduism and yet also wanting to retain their links with Hindu culture. The Brahmo Samaj appeared to offer that alternative. However differing opinions concerning the nature of Hindu identity had already created tensions within the Brahmo movement, contributing towards the first schism.

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5 Mazoomdar, The Life of Keshub Chunder Sen, pp 100, 105, 175-177.
9 Borthwick, op.cit., pp 99, note 84.
10 Kopf maintains that the real cause of dissent between Tagore and Sen in 1866 was the problem of Hindu identity. The older members of the Samaj saw
Marriage Bill in the early 1870s again revived anxieties concerning Hindu identity. In order to achieve a separate marriage bill, Keshub argued that Brahmos were not Hindus but members of a separate faith. But Keshub had a flexible definition of the term, "Hindu." He used it to refer specifically to those who espoused the Hindu faith, but he was also known to use it in a broader sense to include all Indians who drew upon a common "Hindu" culture. Thus to avoid specific rituals associated with the marriage ceremony, Keshub declared that he was not a Hindu, but to identify with his race, its spiritual heritage and its aspirations, he was.

The difficulty of maintaining the Brahmo faith by converts in country areas, in the face of persecution from orthodox Hindus had been recognized by the Brahmo Samaj of India as a major problem of recruitment. Consequently many young people were sent to well established communities such as Calcutta, for support. Although the Bharat Ashram was no longer functioning in 1878 when Ramabai and Shrinivas arrived in Calcutta, one of its roles had been that of an education centre for young converts. There was however a missionary community in the neighbourhood of Lily Cottage which appears to have filled the gap left by the Bharat Ashram. But exactly where Ramabai and Shrinivas were placed is unknown. One of the ways in which the Samaj offered itself as an alternative way of life to young people was by providing emotional and intellectual support for their new religious identity. Consequently the Samaj offered its converts a well structured religious and ethical programme. Whilst women were admitted to the Samaj as full members, in practice there were tensions themselves as reformers of an old faith, not creators of a new. Kopf, op.cit., pp 135-134. See also Mazoomdar, The Life of Keshub Chunder Sen pp 92-93.

11 Borthwick, op.cit., pp 144-145.
13 Kopf, op.cit., p 102; Sastri History of the Brahmo Samaj p 94.
14 Mazoomdar, op.cit., pp 145, 245.
concerning how much liberty should be accorded them. The Brahmo Samaj also
stressed the brotherhood of man and the Christian commitment of service to
humanity. Thus it provided an image of a reformed Hinduism drawing together
the best insights, religious and secular, of East and West.

The Brahmo Samaj offered Shrinivas and Ramabai a rational faith in
place of an esoteric search for the Vision of God. In common with other
branches of the movement it was known for its theism and for its rejection of
image worship. It was therefore highly critical of many aspects of popular
Hindu culture, which it associated with idolatry and superstition; at the same
time it presented itself as a movement committed to the practice of a purified
Vedic faith. In the light of Ramabai and Shrinivas' experiences of religious
corruption and deception in North India, the Samaj appeared to be an antidote.
Yet corruption had not unduly worried Anant Shastri. He had accepted it as
endemic to human society. However, Anant was sustained by his quest and the
sins of others were not his responsibility. On the other hand Ramabai and

16 Borthwick, op.cit., p 99. Keshub was always concerned that too much liberty
would denationalize and "unsex" women. See Kopf, The Brahmo Samaj p 37; Sastri
History of the Brahmo Samaj p 252; Mazoomdar, The Life of Keshub Chunder Sen
pp 150-151.
17 Borthwick, op.cit., p 45.
18 Sen, "Am I an Inspired Prophet?" (1879) Lectures in India; Borthwick, Keshub
Chunder Sen p 203-204.
19 Mazoomdar, op.cit., pp 188-119.
20 Keshub's use of Hindu symbols and cultural practices from the mid seventies
onwards was due in part to his personal search for a reconciliation between his
Hindu origins and his western education and did not constitute an approval of
Hindu popular culture as such. His use of symbols not only from Hinduism but
from other religious traditions was also due to his attempt to create a national
indigenous Church. See Mazoomdar, The Life of Keshub Chunder Sen p 107. Also
extracts from Keshub's Jeevan Ved, Chapters IX, "The Beginnings of Yoga or
Communion, 12, "Synthesis and Analysis" quoted in the above, pp 301-303; Also,
Borthwick, Keshub Chunder Sen pp 92-93, 217-218. There were however
criticisms of Keshub's appropriations of Hindu divine attributes which appeared
to some as a compromise with idolatry. Sastri, History of the Brahmo Samaj pp
197-198.
21 Ramabai, "Religious Consciousness of the Hindus" Muktij Prayer Bell Jan 1907
Shrinivas were no longer comforted by Anant's faith and no longer able to tolerate systemic corruption.\textsuperscript{22} During their travels their eyes had been opened not only to corruption but also to the enormous inequalities within Indian society. Consequently their focus shifted away from the quest of personal salvation towards the cause of social reform.\textsuperscript{23} Reference has already been made to Ramabai's 1884 interview at Cheltenham, "Notes of Conversations with Ramabai," in which she declared the reasons for her conversion to Brahmoism. \textsuperscript{24} The Samaj therefore, was in a position to offer Ramabai and Shrinivas a community of like-minded individuals. Its advocacy of female education had been one of the enduring legacies of its founder, Raja Rammohun Roy.\textsuperscript{25} It was a community whose support of female education provided Ramabai and Shrinivas with access to contacts and resources through which to continue their commitment to Anant Shastri. In doing so, the Samaj provided a continuity of identity for them, a bridge between their old life and the new. In 1878 the Dongres were sent to Calcutta, if not already as converts certainly as prospective ones.\textsuperscript{26}

\textsuperscript{22} "Notes of Conversations with Ramabai" C.L.C.M., Sept 1884 pp 120-121; "The Latest Religious Fair" by Ramabai, Mukti Prayer Bell Sept 1904, pp 18-22.
\textsuperscript{23} "Notes of Conversations with Ramabai" C.L.C.M., Sept 10, 1884 pp 120-121.
\textsuperscript{24} "Notes of Conversations with Ramabai" C.L.C.M., Sept 10, 1884 pp 120-121.
\textsuperscript{25} Kopf, The Brahmo Samaj of India p 15.
\textsuperscript{26} Ramabai, A Testimony p 17.
Calcutta, 1878

Shrinivas and Ramabai were welcomed to the home of Keshub Chunder Sen in 1878, during the period of the Cuch Behar controversy and in spite of failing health, Sen did not neglect them. Up to this point there is no evidence that either of the Dongres had broken caste. They had relaxed some of the severity of Anant's teaching in this regard but not in any way which endangered their purity.

Essential to membership of the Brahma Samaj of India was the rejection of caste and the worship of images. Brother and sister were taken shortly after their arrival in Calcutta to a Christian meeting in which members of the Samaj ate together with Christians. Ramabai's reaction was shock,

"We thought the last age, the Kali yuga, that is, the age of quarrels, darkness and irreligion, had fully established its reign in Calcutta since some of the brahmins were so irreligious as to eat food with the English."

Ramabai and Shrinivas do not appear to have accepted English hospitality on this occasion, but undoubtedly it was an introduction to prepare them for future occasions in which their caste would be compromised. Missionaries gave Ramabai a copy of the Bible in Sanksrit, but it appeared to

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27 The Cuch Behar marriage was being heatedly discussed at this time in the English and vernacular papers. See Sastri, History of the Brahma Samaj pp 177,183.
28 Amongst those Ramabai met at Sen's house at this time, was his daughter, Sunita Devi, the Maharani of Cuch Behar. Sengupta, Pandita Ramabai Saraswati p 65.
29 Ramabai wrote of breaking caste pride by begging for her mother when she was dying. See "Pandita Ramabai" An Address by Mrs Rachel Nalder, Mukti Archives p 4.
31 Ramabai, A Testimony p 17.
32 Compare the "Panch Howd Tea Party" of 1890 after which Ranade, Tilak, Gokhale and others were deemed to have broken caste by accepting hospitality from Christians. T. V. Parvate, Bai Gangaachar Tilak, Navaajivan Publishing House Ahmedabad, 1958, pp 43-44; D. V. Tahmawarkar, Lokamanya Tilak: Father of Indian Unrest and Maker of Modern India. John Murray, London 1966 p 52.
make little impression on her.\textsuperscript{33} Ramabai created an enormous "stir" amongst the Brahmos in Calcutta. Apart from her physical attractiveness and youth, it was her unmarried status which shocked society.\textsuperscript{34} But it also delighted many, particularly members of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj. Furthermore, the fact she had been educated in Sanskrit made her unique amongst the few predominately Western educated women. Yet although all these things could not fail to impress the Brahmos, the one outstanding factor which was commented upon and which featured in the address presented to Ramabai by the ladies of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj was that she was the product of a Hindu education, not a foreign one.\textsuperscript{35} Ramabai stirred the patriotic emotions of many in Bengal and Maharashtra.\textsuperscript{36} A Bombay vernacular newspaper stated,

"The patriotic among us ought to feel proud that there is, even in our fallen condition, one such among their sisters who would do credit to the female sex in any country."\textsuperscript{37}

Keshub Chunder Sen introduced Ramabai to Calcutta society both Hindu and European. All branches of the Brahmo movement ensured that Ramabai was warmly welcomed to Calcutta. Amongst those whom she met at this time was Dwarkanath Ganguli, who was very keen to raise the status of women in India, particularly through education.\textsuperscript{38} Ganguli greatly supported Ramabai and later encouraged her in the formation of the Arya Mahila Samaj.\textsuperscript{39} In 1889 he

\textsuperscript{33} Ramabai criticized this particular translation as failing to make use of idioms and therefore ... misleading. "Pundita Ramabai" The Inter Ocean, Chicago, December 10, 1887. When she began work on a new translation of the Bible in Maharati\textsuperscript{91}, she had many criticisms to make of previous translations, particularly of the usage of certain terms too closely associated with Hindu belief to translate Christian ideas. She was equally critical of the use of Sanskrit translations, and of Sanskrit terms in many vernacular translations. Macnicol, Pandita Ramabai pp 125-127; AchARY, Pandita Ramabai pp 202ff.

\textsuperscript{34} Sengupta, Pandita Ramabai Saraswati p 18.

\textsuperscript{35} D. G. Vaidya, "Before Coming to Maharashtra and Afterwards" p 32, a supplement to A Voyage to England by Pandita Ramabai; Macnicol, op.cit., p 44.

\textsuperscript{36} Ibid, p 42.

\textsuperscript{37} quoted in Macnicol, Pandita Ramabai p 42.

\textsuperscript{38} Sengupta, op.cit., p 4.
was also instrumental in assisting Ramabai with the organization of the first
women delegates to the Fifth Indian National Congress.\textsuperscript{40}

\textsuperscript{39} Ibid, pp 93–94.
\textsuperscript{40} Report of the Fifth Indian National Congress, (Bombay: 1889), p 8–9; Kopf, The
Brahmo Samaj p 125.
Pandita and Saraswati

The highlight of these early days in Calcutta was Ramabai's examination in Sanksrit by Professor Toney, Principal of Presidency College Calcutta, Pandit Maheschandra Nyayaratna, Principal of Calcutta Sanskrit College and Professor Gough, an oriental scholar and educationist. The examination, of which little is known, appears to have been arranged by Pandit Tara Nath and it resulted in the title of "Saraswati" being conferred upon Ramabai by the above scholars. Following this occasion, Ramabai was a guest of honour at the house of Maharaja Jotindra Mohan Tagore where, as a result of her appearance before the Pandits, she was greeted with the title "Pandita". She is credited with being the first woman in India to be so honoured. The Bombay Press dates the event as July of 1878. With the Cuch Behar marriage having only just occurred, it places Ramabai's arrival in Calcutta between March and July of 1878.

Marriage and Widowhood

Ramabai records little of the persecution which followed her inter-caste marriage on the 13th November 1890. Shortly after Shrinivas' death, she was married, according to her brother's wishes, to Bipin Behari Das Medhavi, a Kayasth from Assam, under the Civil Marriage Act of 1872. The marriage caused great controversy in Calcutta in spite of it being a city which

41 Ramabai to Sister Geraldine, May 12, 1895, Letters and Correspondence p 60; Sengupta Pandita Ramabai Saraswati p 2.
42 Ramabai to Sister Geraldine, May 12, 1895, Letters and Correspondence p 60.
44 D.G. Vaidya, "Before Coming to Maharashtra and After",(in Marathi) a supplement to Ramabai's Voyage to England, p 31; also Sengupta, op.cit., p 3.
45 Sengupta, op.cit., p 74.
46 Ibid, p 75.
had witnessed a number of widow re-marriages. But Ramabai's marriage was not a remarriage, but an intercaste marriage. Not between a high-caste male and low caste female (which was acceptable), but between a high-caste female well beyond the time for marriage and a lower caste male.47 Meredith Borthwick described this marriage as "courageous", because it was deeply offensive to Hindu tradition.48 The resulting death of Bipin Behari Das Medhavi in Silchar, (where he practised as a pleader), within nineteen months of his marriage to Ramabai, appeared proof that such acts were inauspicious and an affront to decent society.49 In the aftermath of Medhavi's death, Ramabai was persecuted by her husband's family and neighbours.50 Certainly she left Silchar soon afterwards, visiting the home of Isaac Allen on route to Madras.51 Macnicol was informed that Ramabai's choice of Madras was due to an opportunity there to study English.52 This has caused a great deal of bewilderment to biographers given the opportunities in Calcutta for western education. However, Ramabai's admission that her husband left her in debt, together with Sister Geraldine's statement that her journey to Madras was related to employment prospects, clarifies the situation.53 Upon her arrival in Madras Ramabai discovered that no avenue of work was likely to eventuate and

47 Ramabai described her husband as a shudra. See Sengupta, op.cit p 77.
48 Borthwick does not identify the bride and groom but the date (after the separation of the "two wings of the Sama,") as well as the couple's castes and the publicity which erupted, correspond with known details of Ramabai's marriage. Borthwick, Keshub Chunder Sen, p 50. See also Sengupta, op.cit., p 75, who says that the newspapers "persecuted the couple mercilessly."
49 Sengupta, op.cit., p 77.
50 Macnicol, Pandita Ramabai p 50.
52 Macnicol, op.cit., p 50.
53 Sister Geraldine, "Pandita Ramabai," November 1, 1883, Mother Harriet to the External Sisters, in Letters and Correspondence, pp 7, 18. See also Sengupta, op.cit., p 76.
she subsequently travelled to Poona. 54

Ramabai spent two years amongst the Brahmo communities in Bengal and Assam in company with Shrinivas, a further year and a half in Silchar as the wife of Bipin Behari Das Medhavi and almost another year with the Prarthana Samaj in Poona, during which time she founded the Arya Mahila Samaj. 55 Prior to her conversion to high church Anglicanism, Ramabai had spent more than four years with the Brahmo Samaj. 56 These years were crucial to her pre-Anglican theological formation and justify a closer examination.

On her own admission, Ramabai did not find spiritual satisfaction within the Brahmo Samaj of India. 57 It instructed her in its teachings but it had failed to touch her heart. Her chief concern in life during this period was improving the status of women through education and in this the Samaj gave her support. 58 Whilst Ramabai acknowledged that her interest in Christianity was first awakened by Keshub Chunder Sen, she attributed the first signs of a real revitilizing of her spirit to her discussions with the Baptist missionary, Isaac Allen and it is significant that it was to him she turned following the death of her husband. 59

54 Shah, op.cit., p 7. Members of the Prarthana Samaj had been trying since 1879 to persuade Ramabai to return to Maharashtra to commence an educational venture in Bombay. See Vaidya, "Before Coming to Maharashtra and Afterwards" pp 36-37 supplement to Ramabai’s Voyage to England; Ramabai, A Testimony pp 24; Sengupta, op.cit., pp 76-77,89.
55 Ibid, pp 70-71. Medhavi had been President of the Reception Committee for Pandita Ramabai and Shrinivas Shastri Dongre in 1879 at Sylhet. On the formation of the Arya Mahila Samaj see Dwarkanath Govind Vaidya, "Arya Mahila Samaj, Extracts from the History of the Prarthana Samaj," Appendix 3, pp 350-351. See also The Indian Female Evangelist, Vol 2, April 1883, No 45, pp 49-53.
56 Ramabai, A Testimony p 23.
58 Ramabai to Geraldine, May 12, 1885, Letters and Correspondence, p 60.
59 "The Pundita Ramabai" Inter-Ocean, Chicago, December 10, 1887; Ramabai, A Testimony pp 17, 23; Appendix, "Ramabai Sings Magnificat" Letters and Correspondence pp 428-429.
In *A Testimony* Ramabai described the Brahmo Samaj as an institution with very little religious credibility. But in an earlier address, "New Proposals for the Education of High-Caste Hindu Widows", she spoke positively of the Brahmo Samaj as an agency for the diffusion of Christian values. The discrepancy in the comments can be accounted for by the number of years which separated them, during which Ramabai's conversion to Evangelicalism precipitated a change of attitude on her part towards not only Hinduism, but Hindu reform movements. Therefore, although Ramabai did not find spiritual fulfilment within the Brahmo Samaj, it was not the spiritually negative experience for her which *A Testimony* might lead its readers to conclude, considering that it introduced her to the teachings of Jesus Christ. Furthermore during her controversy with the Community of St Mary the Virgin concerning the Trinity, Ramabai displayed a loyalty to Brahmo doctrine which was suggestive of more than a surface commitment to the movement. The degree of animosity displayed on occasions by both herself and the CSMV in the trinitarian controversy of 1884–1885 bears witness to this fact. The Samaj also played a role in shaping Ramabai's orientation towards Protestant Christianity through its condemnation of Roman Catholic statuary as idolatry. So what kind of faith did Ramabai embrace in the Brahmo Samaj of India?

62 Ramabai, "The Religious Consciousness of the Hindus" (1907) typifies Ramabai's attitude towards Hinduism during the latter part of her life.  
64 Ramabai, *Voyage to England* pp 24-24. Early Christian influences upon Keshub were either Protestant or Unitarian. See Mazoomdar, *The Life of Keshub Chunder Sen* p 58.
The Faith of the Brahmo Samaj of India

Ramabai would have been well instructed in the theistic position of the Brahmo Samaj, its belief in the brotherhood of men and its scepticism of the claims of Christianity to be a theistic faith. She would have been assured that the teachings of the Brahmo Samaj were characterized by a rational approach to religious questions and by a search for the underlying unity of religious truth. Reason, plausibility, rational thought and a firm faith in the authority of science were harnessed to religious discourse by the Samaj resulting in a degree of scepticism towards the supernatural. Keshub justified his hatred of sectarianism by appealing to science. Rather than regarding the proliferation of churches and sects as an example of religious diversity, he viewed their existence as symptomatic of error. Keshub’s belief in the underlying unity of existence had encouraged him to believe that even the great world religions could be unified through the discovery of their inner truth. He envisioned the Brahmo Samaj and later the Church of the New Dispensation purifying India of

superstition and uniting all religions under one banner, thus putting an end to sectarianism and leading the way in the creation of a national indigenous church.

71 Considering that Ramabai had had no serious contact with Europeans or even exposure to Western education prior to her entry into the Samaj, her enthusiasm for science and her ambition for a Western education can be credited to the influence of the Brahmo Samaj of India. 72 On the other hand her dislike of sectarianism and her desire to transcend its limitations may have stemmed as much from the persecution she experienced as the daughter of Anant Shastri as from the Brahmo Samaj. 73 Whatever the origins of her anti-sectarianism, in Keshub, she found a fellow-traveller.

Adesh

Keshub Chunder Sen’s doctrine of adesh (divine inspiration/intuition) appeared to many to question the Brahmo Samaj’s commitment to rationalism. Certainly adesh was one of the significant contributions which Keshub made to the Brahmo Samaj although the idea may well have originated with Devendranath Tagore. 74 Tagore had anchored adesh in the role of conscience as a moral guide. 75 Under Keshub the concept expanded into a direct means of communication between God and the individual, sharing similarities with the

72 Ramabai, Voyage to England p 11; Dorothea Beale to Sister Geraldine, June 16, 1885, Letters and Correspondence p 62; Sengupta, Pandita Ramabai Saraswati p 19.
74 Sastri claimed that adesh developed out of an earlier idea, namely "God in Conscience" which owed its source to the role of conscience in Christian morality. Sastri, History of the Brahmo Samaj p 187; Sarma also traced the origins of adesh to Devendranath Tagore. See D. S. Sarma, The Renaissance of Hinduism Benares Hindu University 1944, p 109.
75 Sastri, History of the Brahmo Samaj p 187
Quaker doctrine of "the inner light". 76

Over the years, Keshub developed adesh in tandem with his theory of "Great Men" who he believed were chosen by God to fulfil particular tasks in history.77 However the divine inspiration accorded to prophets and other "great men," he believed, differed only in degree, not in kind from the common experience of inspiration.78 It was therefore possible for every believer to surrender his or her will to the will of God and like Jesus Christ to become one with the divine. This belief formed the basis of Keshub’s mature christology.79 To those who argued that the doctrine of adesh significantly bordered on the supernatural, Keshub maintained that it was only a development of the evolutionary principle in human consciousness.80 Ironically for Keshub, he was accused of both irrationalism and sectarianism, particularly by members of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj.81

In the last two decades of his life adesh was central to Keshub’s thought.82 He believed it to be the medium through which God directed human actions, particularly at crucial junctures in history. He further argued that

80 Keshub described Jesus as the epitome of the evolutionary principle in human consciousness. He also believed that Jesus represented the divine potential in every man. Sen, "Philosophy and Madness in Religion", "We Apostles of the New Dispensation", "That Marvellous Mystery the Trinity, Lectures in India pp 302-316, 373-374, 376,446, 464-468.
82 Ibid, pp 149-150, 161-162.
adesh was the true spiritual baptism and that the one who has been so blessed was protected from sin. Consequently adesh allowed him to claim the authority of God for all his actions, not least for the Cuch Behar Marriage. It also gave him the authority to claim divine inspiration for his appropriation of religious and cultural symbols from non-Hindu religions and for their subsequent usage.

Keshub's recourse to adesh to justify his actions and verify his teachings differed very little from the traditional authority of the guru, who claimed to be the "Voice of God" in his devotees' lives. Keshub's manner in this respect would not have been unfamiliar to Ramabai. Nor would the incorporation of Vaishnava elements have been unimportant to her. These would have provided her with familiar echoes of her heritage whilst assisting her transition to a new faith. Although the Bengali Vaishnava tradition owned Chaitanya not Madhva as its guru, the devotional aspects of bhakti would have been familiar to Ramabai.

For a woman with little contact with western ideas and isolated in Hindu society due to her father's radicalism, a sense of belonging was understandably important. Max Müller made this telling observation of Ramabai in a letter to Judith Andrews, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Ramabai Association. The presence of familiar ideas and practices, such as bhakti and

83 Sen, Great Men Lectures in India, pp 70-73.
86 Ibid, pp 241-242. Keshub's expectation of complete obedience from his disciples differed very little in practice from that of a guru in spite of his public rejection of the title. See also, Borthwick, op.cit., p 212; Sastri, op.cit., pp 211-213.
87 H. H. Wilson, Religious Sects of the Hindus, (ed) Ernest R. Rost, Susil Gupta (India) Pty, Ltd, Calcutta 1958 pp 87 ff; Sharpe attributes the growth of neo-Krishnaism in Bengal from 1875 to the influence of Sen and Ramakrishna. See Not to Destroy But To Fulfil pp 194-195.
readings from the Gita, would have assisted the creation of a sense of belonging. At the same time elements of familiarity would have prepared her for the introduction of new ideas and practices from other religions such as Christianity. Mazoomdar stated that devotion to Christ constituted an important element in the worship of the Samaj. Consequently Ramabai’s introduction to the teachings of Jesus Christ would have come from various sources such as discussions, readings from the New Testament, articles, conversation, speeches and devotions. She also referred to a book Keshub had published, which she knew only as a collection of precepts. She attributed to this book, the Slokasangraha, published in the late 1860s, the awakening of her interest in Christianity.

Keshub had once defined his mission in life as the reconciliation of the thought of the East with that of the West. It was a mission which he fulfilled privately through the eclectic nature of his own spirituality and publicly through the foundation of the Church of the New Dispensation. Whilst Keshub’s private journey of reconciliation had commenced before his association with Ramakrishna, the latter stimulated him to explore his own cultural roots more deeply. As a result he produced some of his finest addresses in an attempt at a synthesis between Hinduism and Christianity: addresses such as "India Asks: Who is Christ?" (1879); "God-vision in the Nineteenth Century" (1880); "We Apostles of the

90 Ibid pp 198-199, 204-205, 216-218
93 Borthwick, op.cit., pp 92-93, 204-207.
New Dispensation" (1881), and "That Marvellous Mystery, the Trinity;" (1892).95

"India Asks: Who is Christ?" is a significant address in that it provides evidence of the substance of Keshub's teachings concerning Jesus Christ during 1879. Borthwick argued that Keshub's spirituality had at its centre a Hindu devotional attitude towards Christ and addresses such as "India Asks: Who is Christ?" bear out that observation.96 Therefore, Ramabai had in Keshub the example of one who had rationally combined the devotional practices of bhakti with elements of Christianity, in hope of a reconciliation of Hindu and Christian aspirations.97 In her latter life Ramabai, unlike Keshub, hesitated to draw too deeply on Hindu tradition, fearing that her faith as an evangelical might suffer contamination.98 However as Nicol Macnicol observed, Ramabai's charismatic experiences as an evangelical exhibited similarities with her primary religious expectations as a Vaishnava, an observation which will be more closely examined later in this work. In fact he argued that in spite of her Christian conversions, she exhibited an element of spiritual continuity in her life with Vaishnavism, which was not surprising considering that her early religious life was shaped by it.99

As a convert to the Brahmo Samaj of India in the late seventies with a passion for social reform, Ramabai would have experienced a dilemma. The Brahmo Samaj in spite of the controversy surrounding its leader had a vibrancy

95 Kopf suggested that the New Dispensation has been too easily dismissed as a religious abberation instead of considering it as a major creative response to western thought. See The Brahmo Samaj p 251. Also, Hospital, op.cit., pp 1-17.
96 Borthwick, op.cit., pp 206, 209; Sen, "India Asks: Who is Christ?" Lectures in India, see particularly pp 374-376.
97 For Sen's attempts at synthesis, see Jesus Christ, Europe and Asia, Lectures in India pp 26-29; Kopf, op.cit. p 275; Borthwick, op.cit., pp 92-93, 204-207
98 The staff at Mukti adopted an Indian life-style and Ramabai encouraged the setting of hymns to Maharashtrian tunes for the mission. See Sengupta, Pandita Ramabai Saraswati pp 276-277. On Ramabai's antagonism towards Hinduism see Macnicol, Pandita Ramabai p 125; Adhav, Pandita Ramabai pp 40-41
99 Macnicol, op.cit., pp 1, 140-141.
of religious feeling which the more politically active Sadharan Brahmo Samaj appeared to have lacked. However, there was also a good deal of dissatisfaction with the level of Keshub’s own contribution to social reform at that time. Keshub’s loss of interest in social reform as well as his leadership style were factors which contributed towards a second schism within the Brahmo Movement. The furor over the Cuch Behar Marriage had depressed many of Keshub’s followers, not least Keshub himself. However, Ramabai recalled that in spite of his many concerns at that time, not least his illness, Keshub was kind to her. His personal encouragement to her to read the Vedas even lending her one of his own copies was the stimulus she needed to break one of the great taboos of her life. As a result of her reading of the Vedas and the Shastras Ramabai came to believe that Hinduism offered no ultimate salvation for women.

100 Bose, The Indian Awakening pp 149-144.
101 Sastri gives a list of the philanthropic activities which were being neglected through want of interest on Keshub’s part. History of the Brahmo Samaj pp 172. See also Kopf, The Brahmo Samaj p 172; Borthwick, Keshub Chunder Sen pp 154-165.
103 Ramabai, A Testimony pp 21-22
104 Ibid, p 22.
Although Ramabai would have been disappointed at Keshub’s conservatism regarding female education, he welcomed her into the Brahmo Movement and his contacts both in India and the West were to prove invaluable, none more so than the Oxford orientalist and broad-churchman, Professor F. Max Müller. In 1886 Max Müller provided Ramabai with letters of recommendation for her visit to North America and continued to support her personally and publicly for the rest of his life. There is little doubt that being in Calcutta amongst friends who supported her commitment to raising the status of women, and no longer hampered by the severity of Anant Shastri’s attitudes towards caste purity, proved a rewarding experience for Ramabai when contrasted with the hardship of the previous years. She was at last able to earn her own living and pursue her own goals. In doing so she consolidated her status as a reformer, initiated valuable social contacts and became something of a celebrity in the process. In 1881 Ramabai declined an invitation to attend the Oriental Congress of Berlin but she presented a Sanskrit Ode to the Congress in which she pleaded for the continuation of European support for the teaching of Sanskrit and the translation of its literary treasures. It was read to the Congress by Sir Monier Monier-Williams, who held the chair of Sanskrit at Oxford.

107 See for example the following letters: Miss S. J. F. Noble to Sister Geraldine, Feb 18, 1886, Notebooks of Sister Geraldine, no 1, Muktí Archives, Kedgaon; F. Max Müller, Letter to the Editor, The Times, August 22, 1887; Letter from F. Max Müller to Mrs J. Andrews, January 27, 1895, The Ramabai Association Annual Report, March 1895, pp 42-43.
109 Sengupta, Pandita Ramabai Saraswati Appendix 2, pp 340ff; Chadwick, The Victorian Church Part Two, p 36-38.
The Influence of Keshub Chunder Sen on Pandita Ramabai

Keshub Chunder Sen and the Brahmo Samaj movement continued to exercise an influence over Ramabai for many years.\textsuperscript{110} This was particularly discernible during her early post-baptismal years prior to her conversion to evangelicalism. Although Ramabai did not elaborate on her experiences within the Brahmo Samaj, her theology most closely paralleled Keshub’s during the first few years of her conversion to Christianity. This was particularly evident in her understanding of the Sonship of Christ and of the doctrine of The Trinity.\textsuperscript{111} Controversy arose between herself and the Community of Saint Mary the Virgin when Ramabai realized that the Community placed a different interpretation upon the nature of Christ than she did.\textsuperscript{112} As a result of her rejection of the deity of Christ, Ramabai was equally compelled to reject the Athanasian Creed and its affirmation of the Trinity.\textsuperscript{113} Whilst a careful examination of Ramabai’s Christology will emerge during the context of the Trinitarian Controversy, her 1887 interview with the Chicago \textit{Inter-Ocean} illustrated that her own interpretation of the Christian Trinity had essentially been derived from Keshub Chunder Sen.\textsuperscript{114} Like Keshub she described the Trinity in terms of emanations from the Godhead.\textsuperscript{115}

\textsuperscript{110} See the discussion above on Ramabai’s interview in the Cheltenham Ladies College Magazine, (C.L.C.M.) No 10, Sept 1884.
\textsuperscript{111} Letters from Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, June 21 1885, 30th June 1885, Undated Letter 1885, “St Hilda” Letter, \textit{Letters and Correspondence} pp 157-159, 127-129, 143-153
\textsuperscript{112} See the following letters between Ramabai and Sister Geraldine, Sept 20, 1885; Sept 22 1885, Oct 5, 1885 \textit{Letters and Correspondence} pp 84-100.
\textsuperscript{113} for example, see Ramabai’s letter to Dorothea Beale, dated, “St Hilda’s Sunday” in \textit{Letters and Correspondence} pp 150-153
\textsuperscript{114} “The Pandita Ramabai” \textit{Inter-Ocean}, Chicago December 10, 1887
In his frequent allusions to Jesus as the Son of God, Keshub drew on a number of sources including Hindu mythology, Christian liberal traditions which regarded Jesus as a moral exemplar, and science, particularly evolutionary theory as a dynamic principle within human consciousness leading to progressively higher levels of spirituality. Yet although he was careful to avoid equating Jesus with God, Keshub’s utilization of a Trinitarian model for speaking about God often caused misunderstanding. His major contribution to Christology was his development of the concept of "sonship" both as a definitive statement of Christ’s relationship to the Father and as the goal of spiritual realization.

Keshub Chunder Sen was careful to avoid the Chalcedonian formularies which would infer that Jesus fully participated in the Godhead. His explorations into the Christian faith, particularly his references to Jesus as the Son of God, had over the years encouraged many of his European missionary acquaintances to believe that his conversion to Christianity was imminent, but the establishment


118 In recent times this has led to a new appreciation of Keshub as a theologian. See Hospital, op.cit., Pape, op.cit., pp 55-71. Publicly, Keshub’s aim was to indigenize Christ, to present India with a Christ clothed in its own spiritual tradition but with the high ethical content of the New Testament. See Sen, "India Asks, Who is Christ?" Lectures in India pp 365-366,374-375. Also "The Future Church" Jesus Christ, Europe and Asia" in the above, pp 26-27,122-123; Sastri, History of the Brahmo Samaj pp 207-208. M. M. Thomas ascribed to Keshub the initiative for an ideology of "an indigenous Christology and ecclesiology" quoted in Kofy, The Brahmo Samaj p 252. Privately, it was also a personal attempt to unify the important experiences of his life which were his Hindu heritage and his western education. See Borthwick, Keshub Chunder Sen pp vii-viii, 8-9, 203-204; Sen "India Asks, Who is Christ?" Lectures in India pp 374-375.
of The Church of the New Dispensation ended all such speculation. 119 However, Keshub’s devotion to Jesus Christ remained central and it caused him to ponder on the status of Christ in relation to the One God for most of his life. In this context addresses such as "Jesus Christ: Europe and Asia" (1866) "India asks: Who is Christ" (1879); "We the Apostles of the New Dispensation" (1881); "That Marvellous Mystery the Trinity" (1882) cannot be expected to exhibit the rigors of theological argument as contained within the parameters of Western theological thought. Indeed why should they? Keshub’s primary constituency was non-western. Instead there is a meditative quality to these discourses reflecting a process of spiritual exploration and most importantly for any assessment of Keshub’s Christology, a lack of the parameters which have governed western theological discourse.

In an interview with the Chicago Inter-Ocean in 1887, and in her Boston address, "New Proposals for the Education of High-Caste Hindu Widows" organized by the Unitarian Joseph Cook in the same year, Ramabai acknowledged something of the nature of the influence of Keshub Chunder Sen and the Brahma Samaj of India upon her. 120 Whilst she was cautious in the Inter-Ocean interview, she was understandably more direct with the Unitarians. Generally she approved of Keshub’s movement, she informed Joseph Cook’s audience. It was dispersing Christian ideas and values throughout Indian society, and whilst she had reservations concerning its tendency to combine sacramental elements and symbols from various traditions, yet she had hopes that the Church of the New Dispensation would be beneficial to India. 121 An interesting omission in the Address was any reference to her own personal indebtedness to Keshub, which

119 Borthwick, op.cit., p 103
120 Joseph Cook had visited Calcutta in 1881 and travelled with Keshub to visit Ramakrishna at Dakshineswar. Sastri, History of the Brahma Samaj p 251
she willingly acknowledged in the Inter-Ocean interview.\textsuperscript{122}

Joseph Cook’s guests would have been largely drawn from Unitarian circles and therefore it is not unreasonable to assume that they belonged, in the majority, to the liberal tradition in American society. Conversely, the Chicago daily, Inter-Ocean, catered for a more general readership. Whilst Ramabai was of undoubted interest to the American public as witnessed by the degree of press attention she received,\textsuperscript{123} questions had been raised in conservative circles concerning the validity of her conversion to Christianity.\textsuperscript{124} There were rumours Ramabai did not believe in the divinity of Christ and had associations with Unitarian churches both in England and America as well as the Brahmo Samaj Movement. Attacks in both the American and Indian Press were made upon her orthodoxy and upon the wisdom of attempting to establish an educational institution in India solely upon "secular lines".\textsuperscript{125} The interviewer from the Inter-Ocean in raising these issues sought clarification particularly of her attitude to the Vedas and her relationship with the Brahmo Samaj of India. Two earlier interviews which attempted a close examination of Ramabai’s opinions had been deflected.\textsuperscript{126} In the interview with the Central New Jersey Times Ramabai had presented herself as a "New Testament" Christian, one who had come to Christianity simply through reading the Bible and who was non-aligned with any denomination.\textsuperscript{127} Evangelical suspicion of her had caused the cancellation of an earlier visit to Plainfield, New Jersey so she was well aware

\textsuperscript{122} "The Pundita Ramabai" Inter-Ocean, Chicago, December 10, 1887
\textsuperscript{123} The High-Caste Hindu Woman Scrapbook Letter from Phebe C. Adams to Ramabai dated June 1887, Letters from American Correspondents, Mukti Archives.
\textsuperscript{124} "Pundita Ramabai’s Views" Central New Jersey Times, Plainfield June 16, 1887; "The Pundita Ramabai" the Inter-Ocean, Chicago, December 10 1887, High Caste Hindu Woman Scrapbook.
\textsuperscript{125} "The Pundita Ramabai" Inter-Ocean, Chicago, December 10, 1887.
\textsuperscript{126} Central New Jersey Times, June 16 1887; Inter-Ocean, Chicago July 26, 1887.
\textsuperscript{127} "Pundita Ramabai’s Views", Central New Jersey Times, Plainfield, June 16, 1887, High-Caste Hindu Woman Scrapbook.
that a full disclosure of her views could prove divisive. Her reticence in this interview to elaborate on her opinions was therefore understandable. Her answers were brief. She was anxious not to offend any sector of the Christian community and to dispel any rumours that she was not a genuine convert.

In an interview of July 26th, 1887, with the Inter-Ocean, Ramabai was described as an orthodox Christian, a baptized and communicant member of the Church of England, adhering to the Apostle's Creed. Her recommendation by Max Müller was mentioned, as was her forthcoming appointment as the Vice President for India of the World's Woman's Christian Temperance Union. A closer look at this article reveals that Ramabai was not present. Instead all the information in the article was attributed by the reporter to Frances Willard, President of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union.

Ramabai's second interview with the Inter-Ocean took place in December of 1887. Both Ramabai and Frances Willard were present. In this article Ramabai was asked whether or not she was a Unitarian. She replied, "No" and rejected attempts to categorize her as anything else but a New Testament Christian. Terms such as "Unitarian" and "Trinitarian" she argued were not in the New Testament and therefore irrelevant to her. In fact she claimed, she did not understand what such terms meant. This of course was not true. Ramabai's controversy with the CSMV regarding the doctrine of the Trinity, the Athanasian Creed and the nature of the Church and sacraments had made her only too well aware of the meaning of such terms. She clearly understood not only the terms to which the interviewer referred but the reasons why the reporter introduced them. She was determined to deflect any questions which might injure her standing with the public.

Touching on the subject of Keshub Chunder Sen in the interview,

128 Ibid.
129 "Hindu Child Widows: An effort being made to teach them to read and write..."the Inter-Ocean Chicago, July 26, 1887.
Ramabai disclosed that her first contact with the New Testament was through Sen's book of Precepts, the Slokasañgraha or Collection of Texts. This book, she stated, was comprised of a collection of texts from various religions with the majority having their source in the New Testament. As well as this collection, in 1879, Keshub had also prepared a simple curriculum for the women of the Arya Nari Samaj based upon memorization of facts reminiscent of English female curricula of the early 19th century, but which by then were considerably outdated. Mazomdar also mentioned set readings for women from the Bhagavad Gita and the Bible, which were in use for "sisters" in the Church of the New Dispensation.

When Ramabai was asked by the Inter-Ocean reporter what made Christianity superior to other faiths, she did not hesitate to reply that it was Christ's attitude to women which set it apart from all other religions. Devotion to Christ was central to the faith of both Ramabai and Keshub. Similarly, like Keshub, Ramabai also recognized truths in various scriptures, including the Vedas and Shastras and in secular works such as those of Marcus Aurelius and Plato. However she denied that she regarded any other scriptures or works of philosophy on a level of equality with the Bible.

130 Farquhar, Modern Religious Movements in India p 46.
131 For example, the Savitri vow of love and devotion towards the husband; the Maitreyi vow of companionship with one's husband in spiritual knowledge; the Draupadi vow to be an active and dutiful housewife, and the Lilavati vow to attain knowledge. These "vows" were each reduced to a number of categories, each comprised of seven questions and answers. Sastrī, History of the Brahmo Samaj p 207; Borthwick, Keshub Chunder Sen pp 207-208. On the development of female education in Britain from mid to late century see references to "The noxious brood of catechisms" in Dorothea Beale's "A Record of Fifty Years" C.L.C.M., Spring 1907, pp 4,6-7.
133 "The Pundita Ramabai" Inter-Ocean, Chicago, December 10, 1887.
134 Borthwick argued that a predominant reason why Keshub did not become a Christian was that he found bhakti a better venue for the expression of his devotion to Christ than Christianity. Keshub Chunder Sen p 206.
135 "The Pundita Ramabai" Inter-Ocean, December 10, 1887.
Considering the political and organizational experience of women such as Frances Willard, who were guiding Ramabai at this period, it is not unlikely that Ramabai was advised to avoid or minimise all divisive issues in order to obtain support from as many quarters as possible. Hence her attempt to present herself as "a simple New Testament Christian." This ability to seek common ground and minimise differences of opinions had proved to be one of the strengths of the W. C. T. U., whose members were drawn from varying circles of denominational and political opinion.137 Ramabai hoped America would finance her educational work in India for the following ten years, so it was undoubtedly in her interests to convince Americans that she was indeed a Christian. A major source of division was her rejection of Christ's divinity, which had Unitarian approval but had undoubtedly cost Evangelical support, the visit to Plainfield being a case in point.138 In the search for support for her non-sectarian school, Ramabai's Achilles heel was her questionable orthodoxy. Even if she could persuade evangelical Christians to adopt the principle of a non-sectarian school, the fact that it was to be headed by a woman, who rejected the divinity of Christ, was not a good recommendation. The New York Evangelist shared this opinion and urged its readers not to divert support from those who were preaching the Gospel on foreign shores in favour of one of a dubious nature.139

136 Ibid.
138 "Pundita Ramabai's Views" Central New Jersey Times, June 16, 1887.
139 Phebe, New York Evangelist December 22, 1887, High Caste Hindu Woman Scrapbook.
Chapter 4: Ramabai's Conversion to Anglicanism

Recent studies in religious conversion have highlighted the need to place converts in context, necessitating an examination of their socio-political, anthropological and religious systems in order to understand what conversion might imply for either the individuals or groups involved.¹ Nor has the importance of psychology been diminished in such studies.² At the very least conversion involves the acceptance of a new religious identity, although the nature and degree of surrender associated with the previous identity can vary enormously.³ And the advantage of establishing a broad definition of religious conversion, such as the acquisition of a new religious identity, is that it is able to encompass a wide range of conversion experiences and behaviours from the apparently sudden and cataclysmic experience of Saul of Tarsus, to Indian mass movements, or even to less dramatic changes of religious affiliation within the same religion. On the other hand Richard Travisano's definition of religious conversion as a "radical reorganization of identity, meaning and life...", and Bernard Lonergan's definition of conversion as becoming possessed by an "other-worldly love", are both based on models of personal transformation, which by definition exclude those who change their religious identity for reasons other

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than religious conviction. And whilst models of personal transformation suit some conversion accounts, particularly those of converts to evangelical and charismatic traditions in which testimonies to conversions are an important source of group verification, they fail to do justice to those whose stories involve less dramatic upheaval or who were motivated by non religious issues to change their religion. Nor can conversion theories based on models of personal transformation adequately account for those who often change their religious affiliation moving from one experience to another. But as we shall see Ramabai’s conversion accounts do fit a model of personal transformation, particularly her conversion to Evangelicalism, which is not surprising considering that this was the only model of conversion acceptable in such circles.

Previous chapters have elucidated the importance of Ramabai’s religious context and her indebtedness to her father, Anant Shastri. Her cultural background, both as a Chitpavan Brahmin woman and as a bhakta, have been stressed, particularly the latter as it proved an enduring aspect of her spirituality. Likewise attention has been drawn to the marginality of Anant Shastri within his caste and sect. Therefore, Ramabai’s experiences within a family which had defied convention cannot be overlooked as a contributing factor to her consideration of other possibilities in life. Reference too has been made to the crisis on the Vengadam Hills which precipitated her movement away from the family’s traditional beliefs and practices. Finally it has been established that in spite of her rejection of Hinduism, she retained certain values associated with

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5 Balch & Taylor, "Seekers and Saucers" Conversion Careers, (ed) Richardson p 60.

6 Rambo, Understanding Conversion p 41.
the education and status of women which had been central to the life of her family and which touched upon her own being.

Interestingly at every major religious juncture in Ramabai’s life, there was a period of emotional disturbance, in fact crisis. The events surrounding the death of her parents precipitated her crisis of faith in Hinduism. The death of her husband led her closer to Christianity and her protracted struggle with the Poona Advisory Board during her conversion to Evangelicalism mirrored her inner turmoil, eventually precipitating a serious crisis in the Sharada Sadan. 7 Ramabai’s conversion to Anglicanism was also preceded and accompanied by crisis, in particular the death of her companion, Anandabai Bhagat. 8 Whilst these and other events undoubtedly upset the equilibrium of her life, the emotional turmoil associated with the major spiritual changes in her life was symptomatic of her continual search for spiritual fulfilment which drove her throughout most of her early life. It was a quest which was intricately bound up with her own identity and which ended with her conversion to Evangelicalism. 9 In contrast to earlier losses, when Manoramabai died in 1921 Ramabai accepted her daughter’s death with quiet fortitude. There was no unsettling of her faith, nor even questioning, for there was no longer a quest to pursue.

Ramabai’s conversion to Anglicanism was a radical step, involving a tradition transition. As such it involved her in a cultural shift, not least

geographically. Her journey to England and adaptation to the English educational system as well as to English culture and climate was not without considerable difficulty. Her conversion to Evangelicalism, which was a change of affiliation within the same religion (institutional transition), was a more satisfying emotional experience. But it was, as we shall see, largely on her own terms as well as her own turf.10 There is little doubt that Ramabai’s motivation for conversion to Anglicanism was multi-layered, involving economic, educational and social considerations to which reference has already been made. However, overriding her ambitions to secure aid and support for her proposed work for Hindu widows was her search for salvation as a woman and as a widow. 11 As the inferior status of women within Hinduism was justified by an appeal to religious texts and customs, in her public addresses urging the "uplift" of Hindu women, Ramabai attempted to counter prevailing views by appealing to the texts and traditions of the Vedic Age. However religious change of such magnitude is slow and time consuming even if successful, and Ramabai’s reading of the Dharmashastras and Vedas and her own experiences of Hindu orthodoxy, persuaded her that the weight of opinion was against liberalisation.12

10 On types of conversion, see Rambo, Understanding Conversion pp 38-39.
Ramabai’s attraction to Christianity was to a large extent motivated by its reputation as an egalitarian faith. In spite of her marriage to a Brahmo and her association with the Brahmo community in Assam, her experiences as a Hindu widow following the death of Bipin Behari, only served to confirm custom and tradition as powerful forces in proclaiming the gross deficiencies of the feminine character. Widowhood reinforced the marginality of Ramabai’s position within Hindu society and confirmed her identity with a despised section of the community. Her arrival in Maharashtra under the protection of Judge Ranade and her subsequent founding of the Arya Mahila Samaj, whilst generating enthusiasm from sections of the European community and associates of the Prarthana Samaj, made little impact upon the wider section of Hindu society. But in converting to Christianity, she found affirmation and status within an internationally powerful religious system, as well as opportunities to further her own education and to realize her ambitions. Most importantly she found salvation as a woman. During her years in England and the United States, particularly the latter, Ramabai was free to come and go within society without the stigma of widowhood or the restrictions of caste. It was an experience which would have been denied her in India.

Whilst conversion did not solve the problem of Ramabai’s marginality within Hindu society, it did provide her with financial and political resources which made her less vulnerable. Her increasingly international reputation as the "One Ramabai in all India" and her standing within the Christian community

strengthened her position, allowing her to achieve her ambitions. 16 Having acknowledged the obvious social and economic benefits which conversion brought, what will be argued here is that Ramabai’s conversion was also an existential breakthrough for her in her search for validation as a woman, and as such it was a deeply moving experience as will become evident by her own testimony. Consequently Dr George F. Pentecost’s description of her conversion to Anglicanism as simply “intellectual” was over-simplified in its assessment, but it was a criticism made from the perspective of holiness theology, and following her second conversion, it was an opinion Ramabai came to share. 17 However, Ramabai was in pursuit of two different but not unrelated spiritual goals in her two Christian conversions. These goals formed the structural foundation of her work *A Testimony of our Inexhaustible Treasure*. Reference has already been made to the work’s ready divisibility into two sections. The first section described Ramabai’s first conversion as primarily a search for salvation and affirmation as a woman. Within Anglicanism she achieved that aim. 18 The second section described her conversion to the Holiness Movement and the fulfilment of her quest for more satisfying spiritual experiences. Ramabai distinguished between the two conversions by stating that in her conversion to Anglicanism she discovered Christ’s religion, and in her conversion to Holiness she discovered Christ. 19 Both conversions were prompted by a number of considerations and neither could be aptly described as “intellectual”.

Ramabai’s search for salvation as a woman, which she realized within

Anglican Christianity, can be traced back to Anant Shastri who provided her with both the mental resources to resist prevailing opinions of a Hindu woman’s nature and role, as well as the content to aspire to something greater. Assisting her through the transition from Brahmoism to Christianity was Sister Geraldine, whom she addressed as "Ajeebai" (grandmother) and with whom, in spite of their many disagreements, she formed a deep and lasting bond. 20 There is little doubt that Geraldine, along with Dorothea Beale, supplied the emotional support for Ramabai during the latter’s post-baptismal period in England. 21

There was pressure exerted upon Ramabai and Anandabai Bhagat to convert to Christianity as is evident from the events surrounding the latter’s suicide. How much pressure and whether it can rightly be described as coercion, will be examined later. While there is no doubt that Anandabai was frightened and apprehensive at the thought of her impending baptism, there was also a suggestion that she had a history of emotional instability. 22 Conversely it will also become obvious that Ramabai actively sought her own conversion, in spite of

20 A few weeks before her death Ramabai spoke to Lucia Fuller of her indebtedness to Sister Geraldine. See Mary Lucia Eierce Fuller, Triumph of an Indian Widow, p 27.
22 "Suicide of a Native Lady in England" Bombay Gazette, September 10, 1883 p 2; Sister Geraldine, Letters and Correspondence, p 9.
a significant degree of pressure exerted by the CSMV. For although she subsequently rejected Anglicanism, she did not repudiate Christianity; instead she enlarged its boundaries beyond the confines of the Church of England, and in doing so tapped a well of inter-denominational support.

Following an analysis of the historical context of Ramabai’s conversion and the events leading up to her baptism, two further aspects will require a degree of attention: Ramabai’s own understanding of her conversion and the rationale behind her choice of Anglicanism as her point of entry into the Christian Faith. In order to establish a basis for discussing Ramabai’s choice of Anglicanism, the historical background of the Community of St Mary the Virgin’s Poona Mission will be examined as well as its strategems in the conversion of Indian women, particularly the high-caste.

23 Frederick R Lynch identifies one of the weaknesses of some sociological models, of which Lofland and Stark’s “Becoming a World-Saver” is an example, as being the assumed passiveness of the pre-convert. See “Toward a Theory of Conversion and Commitment to the Occult” in Conversion Careers, p 101. See also Eugene V Gallagher, Expectation and Experience, Scholars Press, Atlanta Georgia 1990 pp 79, 86-87.

24 Ramabai rejected affiliation with any particular church proclaiming instead her membership of the universal Church of Christ. “The Pundita Ramabai” Inter-Ocean, Chicago, December 10 1897.
The Historical Context:

Isaac Allen

Ramabai's interest in Christianity was awakened by the Brahmo Samaj. Contact with the Baptist missionary, Isaac Allen was the next crucial step in her progress towards Christianity. Ramabai had been introduced to Isaac Allen by her husband, Bipin Behari Das Medhavi in Silchar, Assam.25 Allen, originally from Bristol, was a graduate of Oberlin College U.S.A. Having an aversion to strict Calvinism, his choice of Oberlin was due to its more liberal theological views.26 He supported the emancipation movement in America and enlisted in the Northern army on the eve of the Civil War. However, before hostilities had commenced he suffered an injury during basic training and was discharged. In 1863 he applied to and was accepted by the Baptist Missionary Society for work in India.27

Bipin Behari had been educated at a mission school and initially Allen's visits to his home were welcomed.28 When Ramabai's interest in Christianity deepened, it disturbed him and Allen's visits were curtailed but not before the latter had strategically left a copy of the Gospel of Luke in the house.29 Considering that Ramabai, as a woman, had been unable to find salvation in Hinduism, this particular Gospel had been well chosen. One of the characteristics of Luke's Gospel is the depiction of many women in a close and therefore salvific

25 Ramabai, A Testimony p 23.
28 Ramabai, A Testimony p 23.
29 Ibid, p 23.
relationship to Christ.\textsuperscript{30} After the death of her husband, it was to Allen and his wife that Ramabai turned for comfort.\textsuperscript{31} It was a friendship which continued over the years and when Allen was invalided home in 1885, Ramabai visited him in Bristol.\textsuperscript{32}

Contact with the Community of St Mary the Virgin, Poona.

In 1882, Ramabai came into contact with the CSMV. Two people, to whom she was introduced through the Community and who played a crucial role in her conversion, were the Community’s zenana worker, Miss Hurford and the Reverend Nehemiah Goreh of the S.S.J.E. During this period Ramabai also met Sister Geraldine, who, when she was baptized, accepted the role of her godmother and spiritual director, a responsibility she continued to exercise with varying degrees of influence until her death in 1917.

Geraldine was amongst the original group of sisters from the CSMV, who accepted the invitation of The Right Reverend Louis George Mylne, Bishop of Bombay, to establish a mission in Poona.\textsuperscript{33} The Community sent five sisters to Poona in 1878, including three teaching sisters, Geraldine, Laura and Theresa.\textsuperscript{34} It was the beginning of an association with India which the Community continues to the present day.

\textsuperscript{31} Ramabai to Sister Geraldine, May 12, 1895, Letters and Correspondence p 58; "Called to Higher Service: Reverend Isaac Allen M. A. " p 325.
\textsuperscript{32} Ramabai to Sister Geraldine, May 12, 1895, Letters and Correspondence p 58.
\textsuperscript{33} CSMV A Hundred Years of Blessing Within An English Community. S.P.C.K. London 1946, p 120.
\textsuperscript{34} Ibid, p 120.
Within six months of the sisters' arrival the headmistress of St Mary's Diocesan High School in Poona died, and the CSMV was requested to take responsibility for the school. The school was only one of many demands made upon the Community at this time. In 1878 the mission received an influx of orphans as a result of the Great Famine of 1877-1878. To accommodate such a number, a property was acquired known as Panch Howds, three miles from the High School. There were costs involved in daily travelling to the school as Miss Hurford's problems with zenana work testify. Eventually money was raised to purchase a bullock cart for the zenana work but there is little doubt that often the sisters walked to school. The work was hard. The Community was grossly understaffed and there were problems with accommodation and with adaptation to the climate. Consequently the sisters suffered a good deal of ill health. Sister Elizabeth the sister-in-charge, was invalided home and replaced by Sister Eleanor. Beatrice almost died, and Geraldine had a nervous breakdown. Coming predominantly from middle-class backgrounds in England, nothing in their experience had prepared the sisters for the hardship

36 Amongst other concerns were the orphanage, the laundry and the dispensary. CSMV, "The Work at Poona" The CSMV Annual Report, Jan 29, 1883 pp 5-7.
37 CSMV, A Hundred Years of Blessing p 121; Elwin, Thirty Four Years in Poona City p 16; "The Work at Poona", The CSMV Annual Report, Jan 29, 1883 p 5.
38 CSMV A Hundred Years of Blessing p 121-122.
39 August 1, 1880, Monthly Letters of the CSMV.
40 Ibid.
41 December 1, 1879, March 1, 1880, August 1 1880, September 1, 1880, February 1, 1881, March 1, 1881, Monthly Letters of the CSMV.
43 March 1, 1881, Monthly Letters of the CSMV, Sister Geraldine, Letters and Correspondence p 5; CSMV, A Hundred Years of Blessing p 122.
44 Sister Geraldine, Letters and Correspondence p 5.
of that period. In Sister Geraldine's words,

"The Mission passed through a time of such testing through various sorrowful events that, in the words of Bishop Mylne, only the good work done in St Mary's School saved it from complete failure." \(^{45}\)

As a result, the Mission at Panch Howd was taken over by the Society of St John the Evangelist (S.S.J.E.), popularly known as the Cowley Fathers.\(^{46}\) The CSMV continued to staff the Girls' School and in 1886 it accepted responsibility for the hospital at Poona. The work of the CSMV gradually expanded over the next few years with the arrival of more sisters from England.\(^{47}\) The close association between the S.S.J.E. and the C.S.M.V continued in Poona but the CSMV was undoubtedly disappointed that it had lost control of the mission.\(^{48}\)

The CSMV was still in the recovery stage in 1882 when Ramabai and Ramabai Ranade approached the Community with a request for English lessons. Frustrated with the slowness of the reform movement in Bombay and Poona, Ramabai Dongre Medhavi was considering the possibility of going to England to study for a medical degree.\(^{49}\) She had long been aware of the desperate need for female doctors in India.\(^{50}\) To achieve her goal Ramabai required a

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\(^{45}\) Ibid.
\(^{47}\) The Epiphany School was built in 1886 as a school for high-caste Indian girls. CSMV, A Hundred Years of Blessing p 122.
\(^{48}\) Mother Harriet, February 1, 1881, Monthly Letters of the CSMV.
\(^{49}\) Ramabai, "The Angel Who Brought Me a Message from the Unknown God" Mukti Prayer Bell, September 1907 p 15; Ramabai to the Editor of the Times, "The Hindoo Marriage Law", The Times, London, September 27, 1887.
\(^{50}\) Ramabai, Voyage to England pp 10-11; Address before the Hunter Education Commission 1882 in Rachel Bodley's Introduction to The High-Caste Hindu Woman pp xvi-xviii ; "Medical Women for India" Speech given by Mrs. Dr. Hogan to the Zenana Bible and Medical Mission reported in the Indian Female Evangelist Vol 2, pp 3-6 1883 for a description on the plight of Indian women.
knowledge of the English language. Miss Hurford was a zenana worker with many years experience in Calcutta.\textsuperscript{51} It was part of her evangelistic method to offer herself as a teacher of English, provided that her pupils would receive instruction in Christianity.\textsuperscript{52} As a result, Ramabai studied the New Testament in Marathi with Miss Hurford, finding herself increasingly interested in its teachings.\textsuperscript{53}

Miss Hurford instructed her pupils in English and also taught them needlework. Because access to good medical advice and treatment was, due to cultural pressures, often denied women, Miss Hurford was often approached for such services on her visits to the zenanas. The CSMV ran a dispensary but could do little to treat serious medical problems.\textsuperscript{54} Both Ramabai Dongre Medhavi and her co-student, Ramabai Ranade, appeared to Miss Hurford to be precisely the type of women she had come to India to evangelize. Conversion amongst the high-caste was universally acknowledged by Christian missions to be difficult due to social pressure, with conversions of Brahmins being particularly rare.\textsuperscript{55}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item CSMV March 1, \textit{Monthly Letters of the CSMV}.
\item Ramabai, \textit{A Testimony}, p 24.
\item CSMV "The Work at Poona" \textit{CSMV Annual Report} 1889 p 6.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
The Victorian Ideology of Women or The Cult of True Womanhood as a rationale in the CSMV Mission

The CSMV like many other missions had therefore adopted a strategy whereby, where they failed to convert, they at least hoped to "influence", particularly through education. 56 Part of the justification for an increase of women missionaries in the latter part of the 19th century was due to the wide-spread belief that the conversion of heathen mothers was the key to the evangelisation of the family and therefore to the establishment of a Christian home. 57 As the American educationist and apologist for the cult of "True Womanhood", Catherine Beecher reputedly said,

"The proper education of a man decides the welfare of an individual; but educate a woman and the interests of a whole family are secured." 58

56 Failure to achieve conversion in any significant numbers amongst the high-caste was a contributing factor to missions such as the CMS adopting a strategem of "influence" See Jeffrey Cox, "On Redefining " Crisis": The Victorian Crisis of Faith in the Punjab" in Victorian Faith in Crisis, (ed) Richard J. Helmstadter and Bernard Lightman, MacMillian, London 1990 pp 321-325. Sharpe credits William Miller of the Madras Christian College with finally removing the responsibility from missionaries at educational institutions to convert students, by proposing that "influence" was a more realistic goal than "conversion". See Sharpe, Not To Destroy But To Fulfil pp 82-85.


58 Hill, The World Their Household p 41. A similar maxim was promoted by The Woman's Foreign Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church (North), "A man's church will last one generation, mothers are the conservators of religion bringing up their children in their own faith," Ibid, p 49.
Women had an advantage over men, spiritually and morally, so late Victorians believed. Provided they kept their good character, they had the power to influence for good the conduct of males and thus set the moral tone of society.\(^59\) This power of "influence" was essentially associated with middle and upper-class women, that is "ladies", who had had the benefit of a proper upbringing, and whose influence increased in proportion to their piety.\(^60\) John Ruskin in his address, "Of Queen's Gardens" portrayed the ideal woman, as both goddess and queen, creating a household of faith, virtue, tranquility and culture, in which she reigned, protected by her husband or father from all the terrors and dangers of the outside world.\(^61\) It was an image reflected in Tennyson's "The Princess", echoed in Wordsworth's "Lucy" poems, and admired by many including Keshub Chunder Sen.\(^62\) Supporters and opponents of female religious communities accepted as axiomatic that woman as wife and mother was the moral guardian of society.\(^63\) But whilst it was an idea romantically

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61 The influence of the Victorian ideology of womanhood can be seen in Keshub Chunder Sen's lecture, "General Impressions of England and the English" in Lectures in India p 130.

62 An important aspect of the debate over female religious communities was a perceived threat to male authority in the family. Both sides of the debate accepted the prevailing idealization of women. Those arguing for the establishment of religious communities such as Canon Butler did so by representing religious communities as an extension of family values, not as a negation of the role of women. A. M. Allchin, The Silent Rebellion: Anglican Religious Communities, 1845-1900, SCM Press, London 1968, p 86, 89-90. On the
associated in English literature with values imbibed in the English home it was nevertheless believed that any woman nurtured in a similar Christian environment had the power to exert a Christian influence on those closest to her. The Victorian ideology of women was therefore an important underlying factor in the motivation of women missionaries in their efforts to evangelize "heathen" women. In view was more than the soul of one individual; it was the opportunity to establish a Christian home, which by its very nature could not fail to impress and therefore have an influence upon the society in which it was established. Faith in the power of European civilisation, of the moral superiority of the English home and of the ultimate triumph of Christianity, led the editor of India's Women, the journal of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, to suggest to her readers that such a combination of influences was a power which ultimately could not be resisted. Expressing her faith in the power of feminine influence, the editor wrote,

"So that at the great Allahabad Missionary Conference in 1870, the opinion was freely expressed that after all the triumphs of the Gospel in the bazaar or street, through tract-distribution or Scripture colportage, in the Vernacular School or College class, yet it was the newest of all the agencies that promised most results - the lady missionary entering the zenana with the refinement and culture of her English home, and still more - for that would be but a starlight in the thick darkness - the quiet but mighty influence of her holy Christian life, with love for souls, and patient, constant Scripture teaching - pointing each inmate to Jesus as "the Way, the Truth and the Life." The CSMV had faith that the Christian "Influence" of its missionaries would permeate the zenana or the classroom, bringing the values of middle-class England into Indian homes. Such values included adherence to the moral code of Christianity and to an acceptance of the benefits of English civilisation, expressed particularly through education in health and hygiene, sanitation, as

Victorian ideology of Women and Butler's commitment to it, see Sister Geraldine, A Story of a Diverted Hope: William John Butler, Founder of the Community of St Mary the Virgin, published for private circulation by the CSMV 1911, pp 65-66. 64 P. Hill, op.cit, pp 41-42, 59-69, 115-117; Bennett, "Doing More Than They Intended" Women in New Worlds Vol 2, (ed) Keller, Queen, Thomas, p 253 65 India's Women, Prefatory Number, Oct 1890. p 12
well as in literacy and domestic skills. The mission believed that exposure to
Christian culture would influence the present generation and better prepare the
next for the reception of Christianity. This was particularly true of the
CSMV's St Mary's Anglo-Vernacular School in which high-caste Christian girls
were encouraged to marry Christians, particularly native priests and establish
Christian homes. The CSMV and the SSJE also hoped that marriage would
eventuate between the girls and boys of lower castes in the industrial training
homes.

"Influence" was sufficiently broad in its conception to suit a variety of
interpretations. For the CSMV "influence" had a specifically religious (Anglican)
and political (English) content. Whilst the Mission was hopeful that its high-caste
charges would acquire the culture, charm and "influence" in their country similar
to English ladies in theirs, it was equally concerned that the religious education
of its pupils should follow high church principles. In particular the mission taught
that a Christian's duty was to be obedient to the spiritual authority of the
Church, and to its secular arm, the Government of India. "Influence" was
therefore all the more pervasive because of its complexity and its elusiveness.

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66 Appeal by Mother Harriet for the Work of St Mary's Anglo-Vernacular
School, Poona, Oct 1, 1886. Monthly Letters of the CSMV
67 Sister Geraldine, A Story of a Diverted Hope p 35; "The Work at Poona" The
CSMV Annual Report, Jan 29, 1883 pp 6-7; "St Mary's Anglo-Vernacular School"
Oct 1, 1886, Monthly Letters of the CSMV. See also Richter, A History of
Missions in India p 333
68 "St Mary's Anglo-Vernacular School" Oct 1, 1886, Monthly Letters of the
CSMV
69 "The Work at Poona" CSMV Annual Report Jan 1883, p 5; "St Mary's Anglo
70 "St Mary's Anglo Vernacular School" Oct 1, 1886, CSMV Monthly Letters;
Sister Geraldine, Letters and Correspondence p 343; A. B. Shah, Introduction
Letters and Correspondence, p xxix
71 Sister Geraldine's faith in the Government in India as both Christian and
civilized made it difficult for her to accept criticisms of its actions. See Letters
and Correspondence p 343. On missionaries as purveyors of their own culture,
see also Bennet, op.cit., p 250.
Whilst the CSMV hoped that it would do little to change the simplicity of native life, its belief in the superiority of western civilisation was an essential component of its faith in "influence". As native women acquired skills in needlework, embroidery and lace-making they were engaged in conversation by their teachers. Such conversations could be wide-ranging, and often included direct advice concerning health, childbirth and sanitation. 72 Sometimes influence was indirect, such as in the dress, demeanour and attitudes of the women missionaries, which were markedly different from those of their pupils.73 A more specific form of influence exerted by missions was through evangelization and the distribution of religious literature. The humanitarian component of Christian missionary work in India was also influential in establishing various indigenous reform and philanthropic movements, not least in Maharashtra.74 Similarly, exposure to English culture through the study of its language and literature was an avenue of great potential for influence particularly with the added incentive of access to employment. 75 Whilst it was very much in the mind of the CSMV


73 Bennett, "Doing More Than They Intended" Women in New Worlds Vol 2 (ed) Keller, Queen, Thomas, p 267.


75 Sharpe, Not To Destroy But To Fulfil pp 72-75. On the influence of Western education upon Maharashtrians, see J. R. Shinde, Dynamics of Cultural Revolution: pp 25-30. Christian missions were also acutely aware of the economic and social ramifications which followed upon conversions and where necessary
sisters that particularly due to the problem of early marriage the success of their work amongst high-caste Hindu girls would not be immediately evident, it was nevertheless a source of comfort to them to believe that by their example they were exerting a Christian influence upon the present and possibly future generations. 76

Women missionaries had proved indispensable to the evangelization of native women, who, as a rule, were inaccessible to their male colleagues. 77 High-caste women were often confined to zenanas and secluded from males other than close relatives but even amongst the lower castes who had more freedom of movement it was extremely difficult for a man to approach a woman unrelated to him. 78 As one English missionary complained, if, whenever he preached, one or two women defied custom and listened to him on the edges of the crowd, they would turn and run if he attempted at any time to approach. 79

It was also widely accepted in missions such as the CSMV that the conversion of young Hindu mothers would have a profound influence on their

provided work for converts often in the vicinity of the mission compound. "The Work at Poona", The CSMV Annual Report, January 1883 p 5. Where whole communities converted, economic and social considerations often due to western influence were a motivating factor. For example, see Duncan B. Forrester, "The Depressed Classes and Conversion to Christianity 1860-1960" in Religion in South Asia (ed) G. A. Oddie, pp 65-93.

77 India's Women Vol 1, Prefatory No, October 1880 p 12; Vol 1, No 6, (November - December 1881) pp 296-297; Richter, op.cit, p 339
78 Ibid, p 321. The fact that Ramabai addressed audiences, often mixed audiences continually brought her into conflict with tradition. The Indian Female Evangelist, Vol 2, April 1883, No 46, p 44. However, high-caste Harātī brahmin women appeared to have less restrictions than high-caste women of other cultural areas in which Muslim influence had predominated. See Ramabai's letter to Sister Geraldine, May 12, 1886, Letters and Correspondence p 61. On the religious and sociological implications of the greater freedom of female Shudras, See Katherine K. Young, "Hinduism" in Women in World Religions, ed, Arvind Sharma, p 88.
79 India's Women Vol 1 No 6, (November - December) 1881 pp 296-297.
families, hopefully on mothers-in-law, whom many missionaries believed to be the most resistant group to Christianity in India. Miss Hurford therefore, in visiting the zenana of Judge Ranade carried with her not only her Bible and sewing box but the ability to "influence" on many levels. Having established her rule "...never to accept an engagement unless her pupils consent to receive instruction in the Truths of Christianity," she found an unusual pupil in Ramabai Dongre Medhavi. Ramabai’s experiences in the Brahmo Samaj and her conversations with Isaac Allen prompted Miss Hurford to request the assistance of the Reverend N. Goreh of the Society of St John the Evangelist, whose special interest and expertise was Brahmoism. As Ramabai’s interest in Christianity grew so too did the expectations of the Community.

80 Mothers-in-law were a powerful group within the family unit. It was the most exalted status a woman could claim within her community. See India’s Women, Prefatory Number, Oct. 1880 p 11; Richter, op. cit., p 321.
Shortly after the commencement of English lessons, Ramabai requested the Community of St Mary the Virgin to accept Mano into their orphanage. Her work as a public speaker and reformer was being hampered due to the natural demands of a small child. Sister Geraldine had not fully recovered from her break-down and was preparing to return to England. Her first meeting with Ramabai, in the context of surrendering Mano to the orphanage, was not an auspicious beginning to their relationship. Geraldine, as her letters home from India reveal, had an affectionate nature with children and she had little sympathy with Ramabai’s reasons for wanting to abandon her child.

In the light of English societal values which viewed a woman’s role as primarily that of wife and mother, Ramabai’s actions appeared to Geraldine to be unnatural and indicative of a lack of maternal instincts. From its foundation, the Wantage Community had legitimised its departure from societal norms by wholeheartedly subscribing to the Victorian ideology of women. As a result Geraldine believed she was no less exercising a maternal influence through her vocation than wives and mothers within the family home. Although, as she admitted, Ramabai quickly changed her mind concerning Mano, Geraldine always had reservations concerning Ramabai’s suitability as a parent.

Ramabai was often in contact with the Community during the months preceding her departure for England. As arrangements were being made by

86 May 17, 1878, Sister Geraldine to St Mary’s Home Wantage, Letters from Our Sisters in India, 1877-1879, CSMV Archives; Sister Geraldine, Letters and Correspondence pp 7-8.
87 Ibid, pp 315-316.
88 Canon Butler believed that woman was the apex of God’s creation and consequently responsible for the moral and spiritual life of society. Sister Geraldine, A Story of A Diverted Hope p 66.
89 Allchin, The Silent Rebellion pp 89-90.
90 Sister Geraldine, Letters and Correspondence pp 7–8, 315-316.
Sister Eleanor for Ramabai's acceptance at Wantage, the latter debated the merits and demerits of Brahmoism and Christianity with Nehemiah Goreh.91 Goreh, himself a Chitpavan Brahmin convert to Christianity had the advantage of nationality and caste over other members of the joint Anglican mission in his dealings with Ramabai. In particular he had made a study of Brahmoism and specifically targeted its members as potential converts to Christianity.92 Members of the Prarthana Samaj became concerned when Ramabai's speeches became peppered, not with quotations from the Gita, as had been her custom, but from the New Testament.93 Many attempted to persuade her not to go to England, including evangelical missionaries concerned about her involvement with the CSMV.94

The expectations of the Community regarding Ramabai were high. A letter from Sister Eleanor to Sister Elizabeth at Wantage dated the 28th December 1882, introduced Ramabai to the Community and referred to a short history of her written by Sir Monier Monier Williams.95 Eleanor wrote that the Poona Mission was very interested in Ramabai.

"She is very near Christianity, but it is difficult indeed for her to give herself up to it here, or even sufficiently to give up her mind to the study of it, she is so sought after and idolised by the more enlightened of her people—however, I have told her that I am sure that she could not be received by us at home unless she were a Christian or a decided inquirer (the same answer which I know Father Page gave to a man in regard to Cowley). You may imagine what her influence would be if she were converted, and how anxious we are to do all we can for her good.....

"If you would receive her and lead her to give herself up to Him who is calling her, you would be doing more for India than we are, I think."96

91 Ramabai, A Testimony pp 24-25; Sengupta, Pandita Ramabai Saraswati pp 112-113; 116, 123, 138; Sister Geraldine, Letters and Correspondence p 9.
93 Fuller, The Triumph of an Indian Widow p 26
94 Ramabai, Voyage to England pp 4-10.
95 Sengupta, op.cit., Appendix 2, pp 340-347.
Sister Eleanor was very anxious for Ramabai's acceptance at Wantage. Her letter was designed to persuade the Wantage Community to come to a decision quickly. She believed that Ramabai's conversion was possible, even imminent, provided she was in a Christian environment. Behind Eleanor's urgency was a desire to separate Ramabai from the Prarthana Samaj as soon as possible. She wrote of Ramabai's involvement in the reform process in Poona and the difficulties experienced by her in allocating sufficient time to study Christianity. Eleanor viewed Ramabai's desire to come to England as an act of Providence and she alluded to possible repercussions if Ramabai were baptized in Poona. When news arrived of Ramabai's intended departure for England, members of the Prarthana Samaj objected to possible Christian pressure on her to convert, whilst evangelical Christians, with whom Ramabai was also in contact, tried to dissuade her from associating with Tractarians.

Although Ramabai stated in her work, Voyage to England that she gave no undertaking to the CSMV to convert to Christianity, the Community, with Sister Eleanor's letter in mind, believed that she had been made aware of the conditions attached to her reception at Wantage and had accepted them. In notifying Sister Eleanor of its decision to accept Ramabai, the CSMV would therefore have proceeded on the assumption that she was indeed an "inquirer". This conclusion is reinforced by two further reports. The first from Canon Butler's Annual Report which stated that,

"The influence of the Sisters is evidently extending itself in various

96 Sister Eleanor, Poona, December 28th 1882, Wantage Archives.
97 Sister Eleanor to Sister Elizabeth, December 28th 1882, Wantage Archives.
98 Sister Eleanor, to Sister Elizabeth, December 28, 1882, Wantage Archives.
100 Ramabai, Voyage to England p 4; Sister Eleanor to Sister Elizabeth, 28th December 1882.
important directions, and we expect before long to have sent to us to educate in England, one of those highly intelligent native women, (that is Ramabai) who are breaking away from their old moorings of idolatry and superstition, and into whom it is of all importance at this particular crisis to instil the principles of the Faith.\(^{101}\)

The second report "The Work at Poona" was also written by Sister Eleanor as the Mission's Superior. It was dated January 1883 and written only a few days after her letter of the 28th December. In the report, Ramabai's reputation for scholarship is mentioned and that an article about her had appeared in *The Times*.\(^{102}\) The report concluded by saying,

"She (Ramabai) is one of whom we have many hopes, and fears and we ask that all who read this, to pray for her, that she may be guided in all Truth, and be made an instrument for GOD'S Glory in raising her fellow country women from their present state of degradation to the glorious liberty of the Gospel Dispensation."\(^{103}\)

These reports taken together with Sister Eleanor's letter to the Community at Wantage obviously led Father Luke Rivington (S.S.J.E.) to assume that Ramabai came to England as an "inquirer". Only if he was acting upon that assumption can his public criticism of Ramabai's claim to have had no thought of conversion before she left India be understood.\(^{104}\) The April 1883 edition of the *Indian Female Evangelist* also appeared to be under the impression that Ramabai was on the verge of conversion. It described her as a Brahmin but also as "an earnest seeker after truth." The report went on to say that if she were converted the influence she would have on the women of India would be *incalculable*.\(^{105}\) In using the phrase "seeker after truth", and speculating on her

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102 This may be well have been the article by the *Times of India*, which was reprinted in *The Indian Female Evangelist*, Vol 2, April 1883, pp 49ff
104 Rivington's letter was originally published in the *Subodh Patrika* and subsequently in the *Bombay Gazette*, October 30 1883 p 3. See Ramabai's *Voyage to England* p 3. Also Ramabai's letter to Ramabai Ranade, (August 1884) in Adnow, Pandita Ramabai p 113
105 *Indian Female Evangelist* April 1883, Vol 2, no 46, p 59.
conversion, the Indian Female Evangelist was indicating to its readers that Ramabai's conversion was a very real possibility. Whether this was simply wishful thinking on the part of its editor or based upon reliable evidence is difficult to say. What is apparent is that many assumed Ramabai's status with the CSMV was that of an inquirer. For what else did Eleanor mean by her reference to Ramabai's study of Christianity if not that she was considering it as a religious option? As we have seen, Ramabai subsequently testified that her interest in Christianity seriously began through her contact with Isaac Allen and such was her degree of attraction to it that her husband became alarmed.\footnote{Ramabai, A Testimony p 23}

Although Ramabai denied having had any intentions to convert when she left India it appears doubtful that Eleanor was greatly misled particularly in light of Ramabai's conversion less than three months after her arrival in England.\footnote{Ramabai denied giving Eleanor any assurances regarding conversion. See Voyage to England p 3.}

Likewise it is questionable whether the CSMV would have accepted Ramabai without some assurance that her conversion was a genuine possibility. A further point to keep in mind in assessing what Ramabai might or might not have said to Eleanor is that Voyage to England in which she denied having any intentions to convert, was Ramabai's apologia to the Prarthana Samaj and to Maharashtra for leaving India under the auspices of Christians.

A likely scenario is that having exhibited an interest in Christianity, Ramabai became the evangelistic target of Christians, Indian and European, Anglican and Protestant, much to the consternation of the Prarthana Samaj.\footnote{Ibid, p 7.}

In the midst of such pressure she hesitated, wavering from one party to another, sure of only one thing, the necessity of her journey to England. Whether she gave assurances to Eleanor or whether she did not cannot be deduced from the correspondence. What appears certain however was that in the eyes of the CSMV she was an "inquirer". It was a status which, as has been
shown raised expectations in a number of quarters.

At 4.p.m. on the 20th April, 1883, Ramabai sailed on the "Bukhara" from Bombay, with her daughter Mano and companions, Anandabai Bhagat and Babu Bank Bihari. They arrived at the Community of St Mary the Virgin, Wantage, on the second of May.\(^{109}\) It must have been shortly after her arrival that she wrote a reassuring letter to the Prarthana Samaj declaring her resolve not to be converted.\(^{110}\) Ramabai maintained a voluminous correspondence not least with the Prarthana Samaj, which continued to express its concerns about her association with Christians.\(^{111}\) On July 1st Mother Harriet issued a letter to the Exterior Sisters of the Community stating, (in reference to a conversion), that it was early days yet and Ramabai was still settling in. However she enclosed a prayer for Ramabai's conversion to be said daily.\(^{112}\) On July 13 Ramabai indicated to the CSMV her desire to be baptized and on the 23rd of that month she was admitted to the catechumenate, less than three months after her arrival in England.\(^{113}\) Her statement to the Prarthana Samaj denying any such intention can therefore be dated between her arrival in May and her decision of the 13th July. According to Adhav, Ramabai had written post haste to Nehemiah Goreh upon arrival in England expressing her final reservations regarding Christianity and had received a lengthy reply by July.\(^{114}\) After her decision for baptism had been made she informed Goreh.\(^{115}\)

109 Ibid, pp 4 16; Sister Geraldine, **Letters and Correspondence** p 8.
111 Dorothea Beale to Canon Butler July 1885, *Letters and Correspondence* pp 78-79
112 *Monthly Letters of the CSMV* July 1 1883.
113 Sister Geraldine to Ramabai, Oct 5, 1885, *Letters and Correspondence* pp 98
114 Ramabai referred to two letters written by Nehemiah Goreh and also to a "book", which may have been an indication of the length of the letters, or a separate work. Adhav concluded the reference was to two letters. *Pandita Ramabai* p 108.
115 Adhav, *Pandita Ramabai* 117-118.
The role of Nehemiah Goreh in Ramabai's Conversion

Christiacharima Ishyavardatta Ahe Kai? - Is there any Proof that Christianity is a divinely given Religion? (1883) is usually identified as the work by Goreh which convinced Ramabai of the truth of Christianity.\footnote{116} This work is believed to have been forwarded to Ramabai shortly after her arrival in England.\footnote{117} However, an earlier work of Goreh's, \textit{Theism and Christianity}, published in 1882 and subsequently retitled as \textit{The Existence of Brahmoism: Proof of the Divine Origin of Christianity} contained the essential argument of \textit{Christiacharima Ishyavardatta Ahe Kai?} believed to be instrumental in Ramabai's conversion, namely, that Brahmoism owed its ethical and spiritual origins to Christianity.\footnote{118} Considering that Ramabai had many discussions with Goreh prior to her departure for England, \textit{Theism and Christianity}, which Goreh wrote particularly for Brahmos, was undoubtedly the foundational work of much of their discussions together.

A third work of Goreh's, \textit{Proofs of the Divinity of Our Lord}, published in 1887, believed to have been written especially for Ramabai, essentially dealt with problems she had with Anglicanism subsequent to her baptism.\footnote{119} Goreh was corresponding with Ramabai throughout the whole of her post baptismal period in England, and no doubt in that correspondence anticipated many issues raised in \textit{Proofs of the Divinity of Our Lord}.\footnote{120} Both Adhav and Sengupta believe that \textit{Proofs of the Divinity of Our Lord} was crucial to Ramabai's conversion.\footnote{121} Although the work was not published until 1887, Adhav argues that it substantially comprised one of two letters which Ramabai received in

\begin{itemize}
  \item[116] Paradkar \textit{The Theology of Goreh}, p 11; Adhav, \textit{Pandita Ramabai} p 108.
  \item[117] Adhav, op. cit.,p 108.
  \item[118] Ramabai to Canon Butler, July 3, 1885, \textit{Letters and Correspondence}, p 74.
  \item[119] Paradkar, \textit{The Theology of Goreh}, p 81.
  \item[120] Ramabai to Geraldine, Oct 1884; Butler to Beale, July 5, 1885, \textit{Letters and Correspondence}, pp 27–28,76–77.
\end{itemize}
1883. However, the letter to Ramabai which prefaces Proofs of the Divinity of Our Lord is dated 1887 and it contains a reference by Goreh to the errors of American Unitarians. Considering that Ramabai was resident in America in 1887 and was closely associated with Unitarians during that period, it is highly improbable that either the letter or the work was written any earlier.

A further objection to the role of Proofs of the Divinity of Our Lord (or even its prototype) in Ramabai’s conversion has to do with its subject matter. Ramabai did not publicly air her doubts concerning the divinity of Christ until 1885, after which it became a matter of grave controversy. A prototype edition of Proofs of the Divinity of Our Lord would suit this context or its aftermath more so than 1883. This is further substantiated by Ramabai’s comment that Goreh’s contribution to her conversion had been his argument that Brahmoism was essentially derived from Christianity. Therefore it appears highly unlikely that Proofs of the Divinity of Our Lord comprised the substance of the crucial 1883 letter. Rather in searching for the content of Christadharma Ishwardatta Ahe Kai?, Theism and Christianity, and not Proofs of the Divinity of Our Lord would be its most likely antecedent.

In Theism and Christianity Goreh argued that Brahmos did not derive their monotheistic belief from the Vedas but from Christianity. Taking the Rig Veda as his example, he concurred with Max Müller that whilst almost every single god was “presented as supreme and absolute” yet it was not a single entity that was worshipped but rather a plurality. The belief that the multiplicity of gods represented only one divine source was traceable not to the Vedas, but

122 Adhav, op.cit., p 117.
123 Adhav, op.cit., p 129.
124 Dorothea Beale to Sister Geraldine, April, 1885 Letters and Correspondence p 33.
125 Ramabai to Canon Butler, July 3, 1885, Letters and Correspondence p 74.
to Christianity. Essentially, he argued that monotheism under the influence of Christianity was being read into the Vedas. In a similar manner, Goreh dismissed Brahmo belief in a creator, claiming that no school of Indian philosophy believed in a creator, that is one who created the universe ex nihilo. Rather, belief in a creator God had its source in Christianity.

In examining the Brahmo moral code, Goreh was on firm ground. The acceptance by the Brahmo movement of the ten commandments was dealt with in a perfunctory manner. Moral standards in the Shastras were either exaggerated as in the case of honouring one’s parents as gods, or perverted. At best, Goreh argued, they were poor imitations of Christianity. On the matter of divine holiness and human sin, he was scathing. Krishna’s sexual exploits with the Gopis and the worship of the lingam, he argued, demonstrated a marked difference between Christian and Hindu concepts of holiness. As Brahmos share the same idea of holiness as Christians and also the same moral code, wrote Goreh, it is not Hinduism but Christianity which has been their inspiration.

Yet whilst Goreh intellectually hammered home the point with Ramabai that everything she valued in the Brahmo Samaj was traceable to Christianity, he had been unable to sway her heart. Goreh himself had been convinced of the truth of Christianity by an examination of the evidences of Christianity as presented by Paley and Butler, and therefore attached great importance to a rational approach to religious belief.

126 Ramabai confirmed this point in a letter to Canon Butler, July 3, 1885, Letters and Correspondence pp 72-75.
128 Ibid, p 55.
129 Ibid, p 60.
130 Ibid, pp 18-19, 52.58-60.
131 Ibid, pp 52, 57 60-61.
132 The Death of Nehemiah Goreh, Cowley Evangelist Jan 1896 pp 17-18; Letter from Nehemiah Goreh, January 8, 1894, published by the Cowley Evangelist pp
consideration of emotional needs. He did not appear to have had any inkling of the nature of Ramabai’s attraction to Christianity which grew out of her experience as a Hindu woman. Nor did Canon Butler, who conceded that Ramabai had been exposed to every possible argument before she arrived in England.\textsuperscript{133} There is therefore no reason to believe there was anything intellectually new to Ramabai in \textit{Christadharma Ishwardatta Ahe Kai?} However, in settling into a new country and culture she was at this time under considerable stress and perhaps the new component in Goreh’s letter may have had less to do with intellectual arguments than with an emotional appeal. Some support for this possibility can be deduced from a letter of Ramabai’s in which she wrote that Goreh had preached to her from India and that his "humble sweet voice" had "pierced" her "heart.\textsuperscript{134} There is no doubt Goreh’s letter impressed Ramabai and it may well have sealed her decision for baptism. It was not however the decisive event in that decision. That event was Ramabai’s visit to Fulham which occurred prior to the receipt of Goreh’s letter and which may well have influenced her response.\textsuperscript{135}

\textit{The Houses of Mercy: St James, Fulham.}

In his assessment of the role of Wantage in Ramabai’s conversion, Butler was convinced that the pervasive influence of a religious house had in some indefinable manner penetrated her defences.\textsuperscript{136} But whilst Butler appeared to have only a vague notion of what that influence might be, it did in fact have a specific content.

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69-70; Paradkar, op.cit., p. 8.
134 MacNicol, \textit{Pandita Ramabai} p 63.
135 See the discussion on dating of the events prior to Ramabai’s decision for baptism on July 13. On the importance of Fulham see \textit{A Testimony} pp 25-27; Sengupta, \textit{Pandita Ramabai Saraswati} p 132.
\end{flushleft}
The visit to Fulham occurred sometime between June and July shortly after which Ramabai decided to accept Christian baptism. The Community had a number of houses and institutions in London from which the sisters, at the invitation of the local parishes, catered for a variety of social needs including education, parish visitation, youth clubs, hospice and penitentiary work. St James was a "House of Mercy", a penitentiary, for women convicted of prostitution. Women and girls were received there upon recommendation if they showed any inclination to reform their lives. During the time spent at St James the women were expected to do penance, to show remorse for the lives they had led and demonstrate their willingness to reform. Responding to the criticism against "Houses of Mercy" as places of undue severity, Canon Butler retorted in 1883,

"...that scarcely any treatment can be worse for them than that of sentimentality. What they need is kindness combined with firmness, and above all to learn how, not as it would seem some would lead them, to play but work, and then to earn their bread in an orderly and honest way."

Coming from a culture in which prostitution was, on the one hand, closely associated with the temple cultus, and on the other, a despised occupation for which the penalty was to be "eaten by dogs", Ramabai was moved by the work at Fulham. She was impressed with it for two reasons: Firstly, that there were institutions committed to caring for and reclaiming such women, and secondly that they were being treated compassionately. Hinduism had not produced any similar institution. It exploited such women for the period of their usefulness, then discarded them. In Christianity, Ramabai discovered a religion which

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137 William Butler, Annual Report CSMV Jan 29th 1883, Wantage Archives.
138 Penitentiary was the term favoured in the CSMV reports. See Butler's Annual Report dated January 29, 1883, Wantage Archives.
139 For most houses the period was two years. Vicinus Independent Women p 78.
140 Ibid, p 80.
141 Butler, CSMV Annual Report, Jan 29, 1883.
cared for prostitutes, one of the most despised groups of women in her country. In her Testimony she wrote,

"Here for the first time in my life, I came to know that something should be done to reclaim the so-called fallen women, and that Christians, whom Hindus considered outcastes and cruel, were kind to these unfortunate women, degraded in the eyes of society." 143

**Gender and Conversion.**

The issue of woman’s place and value in society had dominated Ramabai’s religious and political interests. She had concluded that Hinduism did not sufficiently value women because it offered them no salvation. 144 Alternatively, Christianity offered her a faith which did not deny her access to salvation on the basis of gender. 145 It was the deciding factor in her acceptance of Christian baptism.

To lift up the status of women in Hindu society to what she believed it had been in the Vedic age was Ramabai’s life’s work, her inheritance from Anant Shastri. She had hoped that the Brahmo Samaj would have provided her with a political platform from which to continue the process of education and reform necessary to restore women to their rightful place in society. But her status, first as an unmarried woman, then as a wife who married out of caste, and finally a widow, was in spite of her abilities to transcend much of her circumstances, a handicap. A Hindu widow, regardless of the admiration she might receive from some sections of the community, could not achieve wide ranging reforms without an adequate base of support. In 1883, she had looked to the Prarthana Samaj to support her, but as we have seen, she concluded that its leadership was too conservative and lacking in will. Yet whilst Ramabai’s passion for social amelioration was a contributing factor in her conversion, it must not obscure the fact that ultimately her deepest concerns sprang from her

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144 Ramabai, *A Testimony* pp 31-34.
religious aspirations. Essentially, her own spiritual need turned her in the direction of Christianity. As a widow she was acutely aware that within Hinduism there was no salvation for her.\textsuperscript{146} She was inauspicious, a creature guilty of such a heinous crime in a previous life-time that it caused the death of her husband, and like the penitents of St James, Fulham, the Hindu widow was expected to show remorse and to undergo penance in hope of a future reclamation.\textsuperscript{147}

\textsuperscript{146} Ibid, p 19-22.
\textsuperscript{147} Ramabai, \textit{High-Caste Hindu Woman} pp 69, 83-90.
Following her visit to Fulham, Ramabai asked the sisters to explain why Christians were prepared to establish institutions for the rehabilitation of prostitutes.\textsuperscript{148} They referred her to Christ's example in the stories of the Good Samaritan and the Woman at the Well. She wrote,

"I had never read or heard anything like this in the religious books of the Hindus; I realized, after reading the 4th Chapter of St John's Gospel, that Christ was truly the Divine Saviour He claimed to be, and no one but He could transform and uplift the downtrodden womanhood of India, and of every land."\textsuperscript{149}

Goreh had convinced Ramabai that the Brahmo Movement was heavily indebted to Christianity and by doing so provided her with a rational basis for her conversion.\textsuperscript{150} But it was the visit to Fulham which proved decisive for Ramabai. It provided a graphic illustration of the difference between Hinduism and Christianity regarding the status of women through its focus on prostitutes, perhaps the most despised women in English society.\textsuperscript{151} The work at Fulham highlighted the practical spirit of Christianity and its concern for the amelioration of women at all social levels.\textsuperscript{152} In addition, Ramabai would have had the opportunity to observe some of the enormous financial resources available for charitable ventures in Christian countries such as England, many of which were organized by women for women.\textsuperscript{153}

\textsuperscript{148} Ramabai, \textit{A Testimony}, p 26
\textsuperscript{149} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{150} Ramabai to Dean Butler, July 3 1886, \textit{Letters and Correspondence}, pp 72-76.
\textsuperscript{152} Ramabai, \textit{A Testimony}, p 26.
\textsuperscript{153} Holy Cross was a training institution for sisters of the third or penitentiary order at Fulham as well as a hospice for women and children. See CSMV \textit{Annual Report}, January 29, 1883. F. K. Prochaska, \textit{Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth Century England}, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1980 details some of the enormous contributions made by women and children to missions and associated philanthropic concerns in the 19th century. See Appendix IV, "Societies Managed by Women"; Appendix V "The Contribution of Women in Financial Terms: A Sample"; Appendix V1 "Legacies" (lists some of the contributions made by
Further evidence that the issue of gender was very clearly the theological ground of Ramabai’s conversion to Christianity surfaced in an interview given to the New York Evangelist in 1888. There she stated that Christ’s acceptance of women “as heirs of salvation” had been the reason for her conversion. 154 Similarly, in 1887 in an interview with the Chicago Inter-Ocean, she stated,

“I think that Christ has done for women that which no other prophet or sage ever did, in that he manifested the love of God and the grace of God not as partial and given to men alone, but that women were just as much children of God as were men.” 155

The evidence of the earlier sources supports Ramabai’s statements in A Testimony demonstrating that the issue of gender in her first conversion was not a later interpolation. The paramount theme of A Testimony which is the salvation of women within Christianity as opposed to their degradation within Hinduism clearly confirms the importance of gender equality as a primary issue in Ramabai’s quest for spiritual fulfilment. Passionately she wrote 156

“How good, how indescribably good! What good news for me a woman, a woman born in India among Brahmans who hold out no hope for me and the like of me! The Bible declares that Christ did not reserve this great salvation for a particular caste or sex.” 157

Compounding the evidence is the Sanksrit Debate of 1894-1895. This controversy, involving Ramabai’s request to teach Sanskrit to male students, opened up the issue of the role of women within Christianity through the matrix of the Victorian ideology of women. Dorothea Beale in attempting to summarize Ramabai’s objections to episcopal rejection of this request and its implications

women to missions), pp 244-252.
154 “New York Evangelist”, 1888, Press Clippings, High-Caste Hindu Woman Scrapbook, Muki Archives, (date obscured)
155 Inter-Ocean, Chicago, December 10, 1887, High-Caste Hindu Woman Scrapbook, Muki Archives.
156 Ramabai, A Testimony pp 26,32-33.
157 Ibid, p 32.
for her role as a Christian woman, informed Sister Geraldine that:

"She (Ramabai) seemed to feel that she was acting against the spirit of Christianity. In Christ she had learned that there was perfect liberty, and though there was necessarily a church order and subordination, yet in the Spirit, there was in Christ neither male nor female. It seemed going back to what she had been delivered from." 158

The evidence is overwhelming that Ramabai’s primary theological motivation in converting to Christianity was due to its promise of salvation for her as a woman. Christian missionary literature abounded with references to the degradation of women under Hinduism, contrasting their poor conditions and low social status with those of Christian women.159 However the idealism surrounding women in Victorian society, expressed for example in Canon Butler’s description of Christian woman as the “apex of creation” contrasted poignantly with her legal status as a minor. 160 And whilst rhetoric was employed to express the moral superiority of Christian women, such idealism was offset by custom and expectation that their activities would be restricted to domestic

158 Miss Beale to Sister Geraldine, May 8 1886, Letters and Correspondence p 49.
159 India’s Women Prefatory Number, October 1880 p 11; Vol 11, No 9, May–June, p 137; Indian Female Evangelist, Vol 7, No 46, April 1895 pp 53–57.
concerns. But many women were able to utilize the doctrine of separate spheres, which purported to define the role of men and women in society, to extend their influence and power in the world precisely on the basis of their domestic interests. There were also a number of changes occurring late century which broadened the range of opportunities for women particularly in the realm of education and employment. Amongst those involved in such developments was the Community of St Mary the Virgin through its educational and penitentiary work.

Conversion to Christianity had been presented to Ramabai as the way through which she could accomplish the social amelioration of women in India. Ian Bradley argues that Evangelicals were particularly influential in dispersing the idea that the British Empire was a divine creation for the transformation of cultures and the salvation of souls and clearly it was an opinion shared by Sisters Geraldine and Eleanor. Christianity therefore provided Ramabai with

163 Butler’s concern to raise the standard of education for women, as well as his interest in penitentiary work was motivated by his particular view of women and their responsibility to society. See Sister Geraldine, A Story of a Diverted Hope pp 65–66. Apart from the schools which catered for various classes of females, the CSMV also had an association of Exterior Sisters whose Rule included the expectation that every avenue would be pursued in obtaining employment for Penitents. Sister A. F. Norton, A History of the Community of St Mary the Virgin: The Foundation, (unpublished M. A. Thesis) Durham University, 1974 pp 43 78.
164 Sister Eleanor, December 28 1882. See also "A Brahmin Lady: Pundita Ramabai Saraswati chats about India and America," The Post-Dispatch, 1888, Newspaper clippings file, Muki Archives.
support and opportunity to pursue her goal to raise the social status of Indian women.166

Although Ramabai's conversion to Anglican Christianity was multi-faceted, it has been argued that her primary theological motivation stemmed from her experience of gender discrimination under Hinduism. As we shall see in less than a year after her baptism, Ramabai had reinterpreted the sacrament as a rite of initiation into "the universal Church of Christ" and not specifically the Church of England, whilst within two years she had abandoned all prospects of working in any capacity with the Church.167

Why then did Ramabai choose Anglicanism as her point of entry into the Christian Church given her subsequent difficulties with its doctrines and culture? The answer lay in opportunity. Miss Hurford was known as a zenana worker in Poona who offered tuition in English in exchange for religious discussion. As Ramabai's ambitions clarified and the decision to seek further education in England was made, she approached a number of Christians with a request for hospitality in England.168 Only the CSMV was prepared to accept her, indeed even encouraged her, whilst others not only attempted to dissuade her but promised a withdrawal of any further assistance if she did not heed their advice.169 In particular many warned her against association with the

167 Letter from Ramabai to Ramabai Ranade, Lympstone, Devonshire, 1884, in Adhav, Pandita Ramabai p 116; The Pundita Ramabai Inter-Ocean Chicago, December 10 1887; Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, October 12, 1885, Letters and Correspondence pp 46 141; Ramabai, "New Proposals for the Education of High-Caste Hindu Widows" Boston Monday Lectures, pp 257-260.
168 Ramabai, Voyage to England pp 3-4.
CSMV. The one reason therefore why Ramabai was baptized into the Anglican Faith was simply because the CSMV responded to her needs at the time. There may have been other factors influencing that decision such as the status of Anglicanism as the established faith of the British Empire, as a result of which it carried considerable power and influence. Likewise the gender of the Community may well have played an influential role. To be ensconced in a sexually sheltered environment, such as a female religious community under close clerical and episcopal protection, was a considerable buffer against possible accusations of sexual impropriety. The need to guard her reputation was of great concern to Ramabai as it was to the CSMV. The fact that the Community was engaged in education and medical work amongst her own people would also have increased Ramabai's interest. Whatever may have been the nature of the contributing influences in Ramabai's choice of Anglicanism, the paramount reason for her decision was the willingness of the CSMV to offer her hospitality in England as well as continuing support for herself and her daughter for a period of five years.

171 In Hindu society, it was the male head which guaranteed sexual purity. See Michael Allen, "The Hindu View of Women" in Women in India and Nepal (ed) Michael Allen & S. N. Mukherjee, p 6; Katherine Young, "Hinduism" in Women in World Religion (ed) Sharma, p 68.
172 The one occasion in which Ramabai appeared less stringent concerning sexual proprieties (as far as Geraldine was concerned) was when she travelled alone to Bristol to see Isaac Allen. See, Geraldine's letter to Dorothea Beale, 10th May 1886, Letters and Correspondence, p 54.
173 Sister Geraldine, Letters and Correspondence, p 9.
Chapter 5: The Community of St Mary the Virgin: Its Religious Culture and its interpretation of Ramabai’s Conversion.

Having examined the rationale behind Ramabai’s conversion from her point of view, it would be useful to examine the event from the point of view of the missionaries or advocates. The importance of the context of the advocate/advocates in a conversion event has been stressed by Lewis Rambo as indispensable to the dynamics of the experience itself.\(^1\) Studies have shown that the cultural traditions and expectations of the group into which the convert is received shapes to a large extent the nature of the experience itself.\(^2\) If conversion is to a particular group then the group has to be in a position to authenticate the event and in order to do so will look for certain criteria for confirmation. How then did the Community of St Mary the Virgin regard Ramabai’s conversion? By what means did its members authenticate it and what were their subsequent expectations of her? In attempting an answer to those questions a brief history of the Community is required as well as an assessment of its predominant religious characteristics in order to establish its culture and its context.

\(^{1}\) Rambo, Understanding Conversion pp 69-75, 87.
Historical Context

Growing out of the romanticism and spiritual yearnings engendered by the Oxford Movement, the revival of Anglican sisterhoods such as the CSMV presented women with an option other than marriage. In doing so, they challenged the accepted role of women as wives and mothers. Women who separated themselves from their families and joined a Community devoted to the restoration of monasticism appeared to threaten the Protestant character of Anglicanism. No one was more aware of this than Samuel Wilberforce, Bishop of Oxford. In 1850 when the Reverend William John Butler formally founded The Community of St Mary the Virgin, Wantage (one of the four largest Anglican sisterhoods of the 19th century), Wilberforce advised him to act moderately, particularly in light of the defection to Rome of Elizabeth Lockhart, the


4 The role of Sisterhoods in undermining the traditional role of women has been well recognised. See Alchin, op.cit., pp 116-117 ; M. Hill, op.cit., pp 204, 254 296-297; Vicinus, Independent Women pp 80.

5 The evangelical critic, W. M. Colles described the disastrous effects on society of the neglect of parental authority and disregard for the family order by the establishment of sisterhoods in his "Sisters of Mercy, Sisters of Misery: or Miss Sellon in the family; with some remarks on "A reply to the Rev James Spurrell" and "Two letters to the Reverend Edward Coleridge" by the Rev W. M. Colles," A. B., 3rd edition, T. Hatchard, London 1852, No 6257 in the Pusey House Pamphlet Collection. See also "Anglican Sisterhoods" (undated) and "Education by Nuns: its failure and injurious tendencies,"(1890) by the London Protestant Evangelical Mission, ibid, Nos 12299, 11522; The Reverend James Spurrell, "The Marvellous Escape of Sister Lucy and her awful disclosures" (undated) No 10183, ibid.
Community's first superior and of her spiritual director, Archdeacon
(subsequently Cardinal) Manning. Wilberforce, whose three brothers were
converted to Roman Catholicism, as well as his brother-in-law, Archdeacon
Manning, was vigilant against any signs of "Romanizing" tendencies. 7
Consequently he forbade the sisters taking life vows even though Butler was in
favour of the practice. 8 Vows were regarded by many as indicative of too
close an association with Roman Catholic nunneries and a threat both to the
reformed status of the Church of England as well as to the authority of the
family. 9 Likewise, Wilberforce replaced the habit worn by Elizabeth Lockhart
with a simple dress for the sisters, whilst Butler's advice to the Community was
not to look like "nuns" but as much as possible like his wife. 10 As a consequence
of these defections to Rome both Wilberforce and Butler required the Community
to have a sound knowledge of the doctrines of the Church of England. 11 This
requirement was reinforced by Butler's experience with Harriet, the Community's
second superior. She tottered on the brink between Rome and Canterbury for
some time. It was only due to Butler's determination that Harriet remained within
the Church of England. He provided a room for her in the vicarage and daily
instructed her in Anglican doctrine over a period of many months following

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6 The CSMV had commenced informally in 1848 but lost key personnel in a wave
of "Rome fever" in 1849 including Sister Elizabeth Lockhart and Sister Mary
Reid. See Norton, A History of the Community of St Mary the Virgin pp 3, 25. In
1879 there were forty three sisterhoods and ten brotherhoods in the Church of
England. The four largest were All Saints, Clewer, Wantage and East Grinstead.
7 Norton, op.cit., p 36; Chadwick, The Victorian Church Part 1, p 511
8 Norton, op.cit., p 38; M. Hill, op.cit., pp 182, 202, 246-247; Allchin, op.cit., pp 74-75
9 There was a riot at St Margaret's East Grinstead concerning the will of one
of the sisters which favoured her Community instead of her family. Chadwick,
The Victorian Church Part 1, p 507. See also M. Hill, op.cit., pp 74-75, 246-247
10 Norton, op.cit., p 37; Allchin, op.cit., p 86
11 Butler's principles of religious instruction to student teachers at Wantage
were a good indication of his method and style. Cf. Sister Geraldine, A Story of
a Diverted Hope p 91 and Sister Geraldine's letter to Ramabai, October 5, 1885,
Letters and Correspondence, pp 98-99.
Lockhart and Manning's defection.12 Butler was a very forceful personality and was described in the official history of the Community as "a man of indomitable will."13 In combination with his personality and his methods of persuasion it would not be unreasonable to suspect that Harriet's capitulation may have been due to excessive pressure. Butler's personality and his manner of instruction became an important factor in Ramabai's experience of Anglicanism.14

The ritual used to install Mother Harriet as Mother Superior of the Community of St Mary the Virgin in 1850 was the ancient service for the installation of a monastic head, making Harriet "the first ecclesiastically appointed Superior of an English house of the kind, since the Reformation."15 The success of Wantage can be largely attributed to the co-operative partnership between Butler, (later Dean of Lincoln) and Wilberforce.16 To avoid the charge of "popery" which was the major criticism of the ultra Protestant pamphlet war, the Community first and foremost publicly maintained its loyalty to the reformed Church of England and on Wilberforce's advice cultivated "the church tone of Hooker and Andrewes".17 This involved loyalty to the Prayer Book, to the Crown and to the Bishop, as well as a reverential attitude to worship and the cultivation of a deep interior life.18

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12 Norton, op.cit., pp 34, 36-37, 69. See also Owen Chadwick, *The Victorian Church* Part 1, p 504.
13 CSMV *A Hundred Years of Blessing* p 5.
14 Encapsulation was practised by the CSMV when a person's faith was wavering. It involved removing the subject from all outside contacts combined with a period of intensive instruction, prayer and discipline. This was the method used by Butler to reclaim Harriet. On encapsulation as a method of persuasion see Rambo, *Understanding Conversion* p 105.
15 Norton, op.cit., pp 34, 69; Alchin, op.cit., p 86.
16 Owen Chadwick credits Wilberforce with much of the success of the early sisterhoods. Chadwick, *The Victorian Church* Part 1 p 509. See also M. Hill, op.cit., pp 215, 222.
Butler himself was a man deeply loyal to the Prayer Book. It was his source of spiritual inspiration. He was also acutely aware that adherence to the Prayer Book as well as the Thirty Nine Articles was his and the Community's political protection against charges of innovation in ritual and liturgy. Likewise the sisters were firmly under the authority of both the Warden, Butler and the Episcopal Visitor, Wilberforce, an arrangement which assisted Wantage in deflecting any charges of fostering in women an unnatural independence. In fact both Butler and Wilberforce presented to the public an image of Wantage as a large extended family, allowing the sisters frequent contact with their families and explaining to their critics that there was no more discipline at Wantage than that which could be expected in any large organized family.

Whilst the community was strictly speaking a voluntary association, its association with Wilberforce gave it quasi-episcopal authority. Wilberforce's evangelical background, his tenacity as a fighter and his pastoral care of his communities made him a formidable opponent to his evangelical critics. He rose to become the leader of the Tractarian Movement in the mid-nineteenth century but in the light of his own personal experiences and the defection of Newman he

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19 A Hundred Years of BlessING within an English Community, Recorded by the Community of St Mary the Virgin, Wantage, S.P.C.K., London, 1946 p 2.
20 Allchin, op. cit., pp 79–80. In comparison to Wantage, The Sisters of the Church were much more independent. In 1895 they expelled their episcopal visitor and did not reinstate another until 1903. M. Hill, The Religious Order p 209
21 Allchin, op. cit., pp 79–80 88–90; M. Hill, op. cit., pp 182; Vicinus, Independent Women p 71. Evangelical opposition to sisterhoods was often fuelled by the system of discipline in sisterhoods. Particularly controversial in this regard was Mother Lydia Sellon of the Sisters of Mercy. She was accused of undue harshness, much of it attributed to the influence of Pusey. see, M. Hill, op. cit., pp 248–252; "Anglican Sisterhoods", Protestant Alliance Tract No LXI, Pusey House, Pamphlet Collection No 1299.
22 Both Butler and Wilberforce agreed with Pusey that sisterhoods ought to be left to develop quietly. Nevertheless, they envisaged that after a period of growth they would be officially incorporated within the church. M. Hill, The Religious Order pp 195, 219.
was a leader who was quick to pounce on any practices he considered "Roman". As a result, Wilberforce forbade Pusey to have contact with any religious community in the Diocese of Oxford in which he was episcopal visitor. And whilst there is evidence that Butler was in touch with Pusey during the formative period of Wantage's development, there is no record of Pusey having visited the Community.

Butler's inspiration for the Wantage sisterhood was the seventeenth century French orders which combined work with the poor and needy with faithfulness to the monastic hours. In establishing Wantage he described it as a community incorporating the spirit of both Martha and Mary that is, work and contemplation. When the Community took up penitentiary work, Mary Magdalene became an important symbol and source of inspiration for both sisters and penitents.

Spirituality.

As a product of the Oxford Movement, the members of the CSMV desired to live a life of holiness. To that end they particularly looked to the Virgin Mary as the model of true womanhood. As tractarians they recognized the authority of the first four Ecumenical Councils of the undivided Church.

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25 Norton, A History of the Community of St Mary the Virgin p 35.
26 Butler visited the communities of Les Petites Soeurs des Pauvres, La Sagesse and Le Bon Pasteur. He particularly admired the work of St François de Sales. CSMV A Hundred Years of Blessing p 3
30 Sister Geraldine, A Story of a Diverted Hope pp 66-67. Butler often conflated various Marian symbols, such as Mary of Bethany, Mary of Magdala and the Virgin Mary, for example see Norton, op. cit., pp 12-13
believing the Church of England to be the legitimate heir to its teachings. Furthermore, they believed that the Church as the Body of Christ, continued Christ’s work on earth through its teaching office and its administration of the sacraments. To be obedient to the Church therefore was to be obedient to God and a sign of a holy life. Accordingly, tractsarians were committed to increasing the authority and rights of the Church of England which they believed were being gradually eroded through the influence of Protestantism and liberalism, and not least by the Crown itself as became evident in the Gorham Case. They argued that obedience to the Church was the first duty of Christians as it was through the Church, rather than through private judgement or state decree that the divine will was revealed.


34 Chadwick, The Spirit of the Oxford Movement, pp 28-29; Perry Butler, “From the Early Eighteenth Century to the Present Day” in Stephen Sykes and John Booty (ed) The Study of Anglicanism, p 35. Tractsarians saw a number of significant threats to the authority of the Church during the first half of the century, such as disestablishment of the Churches of Ireland and Wales and an increasing toleration of Dissenters by Members of Parliament resulting in the abolition of the Test Acts. Similarly Essays and Reviews appeared to threaten the authority of scripture. However, particularly threatening to the authority of the Church was the Gorham Case which awakened the issue of the Royal Supremacy. A petition was organized chiefly by Pusey, Manning and Wilberforce condemning the interference of the State in matters of Religious doctrine. Amongst the signatories was William John Butler. See The Royal Supremacy Collection, Pusey House Oxford, also Norton, A History of The Community of St Mary the Virgin p 23; Chadwick, The Victorian Church Part 1, pp 266-267.

35 On Dean Butler and Church authority see Ramabai’s letter to Dorothea Beale in Letters and Correspondence pp 131-133.
Historical research and a close perusal of the rubrics of the Prayer Book led tractarians to discover many practices which had fallen into disuse, such as the use of vestments and ornaments as well as the celebration of feasts, all of which contributed to their desire to create an atmosphere of beauty and reverence in worship. 36 Central to the sacramental life of tractarians was the eucharistic doctrine of the Real Presence, whilst the recovery of the sacrament of penance enabled communicants to remain in a state of grace. 37 Butler shared in this religious renaissance but whilst he supported the early development of ritual he had reservations concerning its later more extensive development. 38

The spirituality of the Community of St Mary the Virgin was also clearly evident in the conduct of its Novitiate. The prospective candidate passed through a period of testing as a postulant before entering the Novitiate. During this time she prepared herself psychologically and physically to separate herself from her family and the world by prayer and discipline. 39 Upon entering the Novitiate the novice was placed under the authority of a Novice Mistress. Her days were regulated by the book of charges and she was carefully instructed in the doctrines of the Church. 40 The Community kept the monastic hours and postulants and novices, because they were not long removed from the world and its dangers, were forbidden to initiate conversations with any of the professed

37 Norton, op. cit., pp 36-37. On the tractarian theology of the eucharist see William R Crockett, "Holy Communion" in Stephen Sykes and John Booty (ed) The Study of Anglicanism, p 279. Also the following correspondence, Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, June 25, 1885, and Dorothea Beale to Ramabai, April 1885, in Letters and Correspondence pp 68, 122; CSMV, A Hundred Years of Blessing p 5; Chadwick, The Victorian Church Part 1, p 496.
40 CSMV, A Hundred Years of Blessing p 14.
sisters. Most importantly to Butler the novice was to learn humility and obedience and never to express her opinion on anything.

The Novitiate was regarded as a rite of passage and formally marked by ritual and change of dress. During this period the novice was instructed in the Community’s rule, the Chant and the Customary as well as continuing the cultivation of those attitudes begun as a postulant. Obedience, which was essential to the Community’s Rule was particularly enforced by Butler. It appears he was unable to tolerate independent women with opinions of their own. He regarded such women as entirely unsuitable for the religious life. On the other hand he deeply admired Mother Harriet whom he regarded as a role model for those who would aspire to a religious life. He described her as “timid, diffident, yet full of firm simple faith.” At her funeral, Butler stressed her humility and recalled the story of an eminent priest, who had once confessed to him that Harriet was the humblest woman he had ever met. It is not surprising that whereas Butler found in Harriet his ideal woman, he came to accuse Ramabai, when she defied him, of being under the influence of the devil.

Closely associated with obedience as a necessary requirement of the religious life was the doctrine of Reserve or “the hidden life”. Essentially it entailed hiding the self, retreating inwards and avoiding undue attention, complementing the cultivation of humility.

Community encouraged the novice to discount herself and indeed to "hide" her self was to strictly limit her personal time.\(^51\) A further means of self denial was the practice of some form of asceticism such as fasting. In these matters Wantage avoided extremes and did not attract the controversies associated with Pusey's sisterhoods.\(^52\) Butler himself came to draw his spiritual inspiration more from Keble than Pusey, which may have been due in some small measure to Wilberforce's influence.\(^53\)

Crucial to the historical context was the relationship of tractarians to other parties in the Church. There is no doubt that tractarians were initially regarded with deep suspicion by evangelicals and broad-churchmen.\(^54\) They appeared to some to be a fifth column bent on returning the Church of England to the Roman fold and therefore not only their religious beliefs but their patriotism was under a cloud.\(^55\) Conversely tractarians smarted under the charge by Roman Catholics that Anglicanism was nothing but a parliamentary church established by Henry VIII for his own convenience.\(^56\) But we have already noted that part of the motivation for the revival of orders was due to the Oxford Movement's desire to re-establish the catholicity of Anglicanism by

\(^52\) Pusey not only recommended fasting but also the use of hair shirts and flagellation. See Keith Denison, "Pusey as Confessor and Spiritual Director" In Butler, *Pusey Rediscovered* pp 221-222. On the Park Village Sisterhood and the Sisters of Mercy see Chadwick, *The Victorian Church* Part 1, p 508; Vicinus *Independent Women* pp 62, 69-72; Alchin, *The Silent Rebellion* pp 127ff.
\(^54\) Reference has already been made to evangelical opposition. On opposition from significant quarters of the Broad Church see Hill, *The Religious Order* p 190; Chadwick, *The Victorian Church* Part 1 p 119 Alchin, *The Silent Rebellion* p 50.
\(^55\) Chadwick, *The Victorian Church* Part 1, p 177; M. Hill, op.cit., pp 181-182.
\(^56\) Alchin, op.cit., pp 54-55.
connecting it with the pre-Reformation Church of England. As the ensuing conflicts over ritualism in the second half of the century demonstrate it was a difficult path to follow. Sisterhoods, especially in the early years, were communities on the defensive, facing criticisms from a formidable opposition. It was therefore unavoidable that the tensions created particularly by evangelical opposition but also by tractarian resolve, would foster elements of suspicion and even enmity inside and outside the Church of England; Wantage was no exception. Sister Geraldine typified tractarian attitudes in that she almost equated the evangelical wing of the Church of England with Dissent. She did not share the religious toleration of broad-churchmen such as A. P. Stanley, Dean of Westminster, or his mentor, Thomas Arnold of Rugby, let alone share their ambitions for an inclusively national church. The Anglican Church, purified of the grosser elements of medieval Catholicism, but Catholic still, was to her the only viable national church of Britain. A sense of participating in the religious revival of the Church characterized the Community at Wantage; it was a revival without the emotionalism which Butler associated with the excesses of Methodism.

In contrast to the public exhibitions of emotion and the practice of extemporaneous prayer associated with many Dissenting communities, the life at

57 Ibid, pp 52- 54; M. Hill, op.cit., pp 161-162.
58 Wantage endured a very zealous attack from a Weslyan preacher in the early days of its inception. See Norton, op.cit.,p 54.
59 Ramabai formed an association with Mrs Gilmore of the Zenana Bible and Medical Mission which was thoroughly disapproved of by Geraldine, in spite of the fact that Gilmore was an Anglican (evangelical). Geraldine appeared to blame Mrs Gilmore for Ramabai’s subsequent criticisms of Wantage. See Sister Geraldine’s Note in _Letters and Correspondence_ p 19. Also the following correspondence, Ramabai to Geraldine, March 9, 1885; Dorothea Beale to Canon Butler, July 1885, ibid, pp 34, 77.
60 Chadwick, _The Victorian Church Part Two_, pp 134-135, 143-144, 280-281, 393.
61 Sister Geraldine, _A Story of A Diverted Hope_ p 36; Sister Geraldine to Ramabai, Bath, October 1885, _Letters and Correspondence_ p 101-106.
62 CSMV, _A Hundred Years of Blessing_ p 14.
Wantage was ordered, controlled and disciplined, marked by periods of prayer and work. It was also deeply ritualized. The group's structure was hierarchical. There were distinctions between postulants, novices and professed, marked not only by dress but by appropriate behaviour. There was observerance of the canonical hours and compulsory periods of silence during the day, culminating in the Great Silence following Compline.  

The sacraments were the spiritual life blood of the Community. They were the means of grace by which the life of holiness was lived. Regular participation in the eucharist and at prayer were the means of contact with the divine. To ensure that sin did not impede the relationship between God and the soul, the sacrament of penance provided for confession and absolution of sin. The Community measured a woman's spiritual progress by her quiet acceptance of truths to be understood and obeyed. Humility was the acceptable demeanour and submission the expected behaviour.

The tractarian understanding of the nature of the Church, its authority and its spirituality are crucial to an understanding of the CSMV's interpretation of Ramabai's conversion and its expectations concerning her. Authority was grounded in the episcopate and in the Community's Rule.

Through these authorities the Will of God was interpreted through scripture, reason and tradition. Discipline and order, mediated through catholic tradition, provided a sharp contrast, so tractarians believed, with Protestant individualism in which it often appeared that "every man did what was right in his own eyes".

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63 Vicinus, Independent Women; Chadwick, The Victorian Church Part 1, p 509.
64 Dorothea Beale to Ramabai, April 1886, Letters and Correspondence, p 122.
65 Sister Geraldine's Note in Letters and Correspondence p 14.
The Sacrament of Baptism

The CSMV regarded baptism as the rite of initiation into the Church, the public affirmation of conversion.68 Baptism symbolized the purification from sin of the catechumen and of his or her entry into a new spiritual life. Accordingly, the language of the rite speaks of "regeneration by the Holy Spirit," of being "born anew of Water and the Holy Ghost," and of being made "heirs of salvation."69 Whilst the sacrament continues to have traditional associations with Christ's baptism in the Jordan River, a significant association between baptism and the death and resurrection of Christ had been forged by St Paul, which has shaped the rite into a powerful image of death and rebirth.70 As a result, the ritual came to signify the passage from death to life and the birth of a new spiritual identity.71 As the catechumen is baptized in the name of the Trinity he or she acquires a new religious identity, often signified by the giving of a baptismal name. Ramabai was given the name of Mary.72 The power of ritual to bind a community, to reinforce its teachings and traditions and to generate a sense of awe and mystery has long been acknowledged. Its effectiveness as part of the conversion process, in particular its power as a rite of passage has not always received sufficient attention.73 Through the solemnity of the baptismal ritual the CSMV sought to incorporate Ramabai into the Holy Catholic Church.

The appointment of godparents closely associated with the

69 "The Ministration of Baptism to such as are of Riper Years" The Book of Common Prayer, and Administration of the Sacraments and other rites and ceremonies of the Church according to the use of the Church of England 1662. Henceforth known as BCP.
70 See Paul's letter to the Romans, Chapt 6: 1-12.
71 "Public Baptism of Such as are of Riper Years, BCP 1662
72 Oct 1, 1883, Monthly Letters of the CSMV.
73 Rambo, Understanding Conversion pp 113-116.
Community, was a further means by which it hoped to nurture her faith and watch over her spiritual wellbeing. For her part, Ramabai would have affirmed her faith in the teachings of Christianity, promising to keep the commandments and to be obedient to the will of God.

Becoming a catechumen was a voluntary act. The candidate must formally express his or her desire for baptism and make an affirmation of faith in the teachings of Christianity as taught by the Church. Ramabai made her profession of faith on July 13, 1889 and was formally admitted as a catechumen on July 23.74 The length of preparation for baptism was left to the discretion of the parish priest. Ramabai’s baptism took place on September 29, two months after her profession of faith. This allowed Canon Butler a little more than eight weeks in which to instruct her in the basic principles of Christianity.

During the period of preparation the catechumen’s resolve was tested as much as his or her knowledge of the teachings of the Church. Baptism is, as the Prayer Book states, an “outward and visible sign” of an “inward and spiritual grace.”75 Therefore in preparing an adult candidate for baptism, the priest must be sure that he or she approaches the rite with the correct disposition, repentance and faith.76 Butler was diligent in his adherence to the Prayer Book. He prepared Ramabai for baptism and confirmation using prepared material on various topics including the Trinity and the deity of Christ.77 But despite his thoroughness, Butler was instructing a woman whose knowledge of Christianity was elementary, and whose knowledge of English was rudimentary. He was not however looking for theological erudition but for a faith which would mature under the Church’s guidance.78 Therefore, in baptizing Ramabai Butler

74 Sister Geraldine to Ramabai, Oct 5, 1885, Letters and Correspondence p 98.
75 A Catechism BCP 1662.
76 Ibid.
77 Sister Geraldine to Ramabai, Oct 5, 1885, Letters and Correspondence, pp 94,98.
78 Ibid, p 410.
acted no more hastily than many of his colleagues on the mission field, particularly as he expected to consolidate his instruction of her over a period of five years. 79

Ramabai's confirmation which followed a few months later required an understanding of the Apostles' Creed, the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer and the Catechism. 80 It also required her to re-affirm her baptismal promises. Her study of the Catechism would have provided further opportunity for discussion of such topics as the nature of the Church and the sacraments, including the meaning of the baptismal rite and confirmation. 81 Thus there were many opportunities to discuss and to clarify any or all of these issues; opportunities which Ramabai appears not to have taken. 82

Butler's approach to Christian instruction was methodical. He had a book of questions and answers, upon which upon successful completion, according to Sister Geraldine, a student would be able to demonstrate "a definite knowledge of the Catholic Faith." 83 Butler believed it was his duty, wrote Geraldine to educate the mind,

"...by careful and exact instructions in the truths of the Faith once delivered to the Church, the conscience was to be educated by prayer, reverence, obedience and dependence." 84

The question and answer method of instruction was familiar to Ramabai. As she later stated to Dorothea Beale in defence of her acceptance of

80 "The Order of Confirmation" BCP 1662.
81 A Catechism BCP 1662; Sister Geraldine to Ramabai, Oct 5, 1886, Letters and Correspondence, pp 98-99.
82 Geraldine to Ramabai, Oct, 5, 1886, Letters and Correspondence, p 98. Geraldine stated that Ramabai did not express any doubts or reservations about Christian dogma after July 13, 1883.
83 Geraldine, A Story of a Diverted Hope p 42.
84 Ibid, p 31.
baptism and confirmation, whilst doubting the divinity of Christ, she had learned by rote hundreds of Hindu verses, but that "repeating was not believing."85

Confirmation, which was originally part of the baptismal rite, had undergone significant changes in meaning throughout the centuries.86 For nineteenth-century tractarians it was associated with the imparting of the Holy Ghost to the candidate through the laying on of hands by the bishop.87 The seven gifts of the Spirit, which are traditionally based upon Isaiah 11:2 were invoked in ... order that the candidate might be strengthened to lead a holy life.88

The CS MV and the Conversion of Ramabai

The CS MV validated Ramabai's conversion on the following grounds: her willingness to be baptized, which they attributed to the workings of God within their Community, the instruction given to her on the principles of the Christian faith and her formal acceptance of belief in those principles as well as the significance and efficacy of the rite itself.89 Finally they looked for behaviour which they believed was an appropriate response to her commitment, that is, submission to the authority of the Church and obedience to its

85 Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, "St Hilda's Sunday", Letters and Correspondence, p 152.
89 Whilst the early tractarians such as Butler did not believe in an ex opere operato theory of the sacraments they did believe that if everything was done properly and in order God would be both present and active within the sacrament.
teachings. 90

The CSMV believed Ramabai to have willingly embraced the Anglican Faith without reservation. She had willingly consented to baptism and to confirmation, thereby publicly affirming her faith in Christianity. 91 But the tractarian belief that the Church was the visible body of Christ upon earth was but one of many assumptions which Ramabai did not share with the Community. 92 In less than a year after her baptism, she had adopted the view common amongst Nonconformist churches, that the true Church was not visible but invisible and therefore unidentified with any temporal body. 93 In advocating her membership of the invisible Church, Ramabai was subsequently able to deny that her baptism placed her under any obligation to the Church of England. 94

In 1885 Ramabai became further estranged from the CSMV through her rejection of the Trinity and the Athanasian Creed. 95 The Creed was unacceptable to Ramabai, not only because of its affirmation of the Trinity, but also because its anathemas excluded non-Trinitarians, many of whom she counted amongst her circle of friends. 96 And in a personal blow to Geraldine, she

90 Sister Geraldine to Ramabai, Oct 5, 1885, Letters and Correspondence p 99.
94 Ramabai to Ramabai Ranade, August 1884, published in Adhav, Pandita Ramabai p 116; Ramabai to Sister Geraldine, 22nd September 1885, November 7, 1885; Ramabai to Miss Noble, July 6, 1886, Letters and Correspondence, pp 88, 111-113, 195-197.
95 Ramabai to Sister Geraldine, 22nd September 1885; Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, "St Hilda's Sunday", Letters and Correspondence, pp 99, 150-152.
96 Ramabai to Sister Geraldine, 22nd September 1885; Sister Geraldine to Ramabai, Oct 5, 1885; Geraldine to Ramabai, "Bath" October 1885; Ramabai to
questioned the Church of England’s claim to catholic authority. It was a view
which Geraldine attributed to Nonconformist influence.97

Ramabai’s failure to accept the authority of the Church in all matters
of faith and doctrine appeared to the Community to be an act of rebellion against
God and a denial of her baptismal vows.98 Whilst Sister Geraldine willingly
conceded that a person might have genuine religious doubts following conversion,
she could not accept Ramabai’s later admission that she had never believed in
the divinity of Christ or the doctrine of the Trinity. To have undergone the
baptismal rite without belief in the fundamentals of Christianity was to Geraldine
an act of perjury.99 Geraldine was also greatly concerned that she might have
been deceived by Ramabai into making a mockery of a sacred rite.100

Ramabai attributed her reluctance to express her doubts to the
inability of the CSMV to accept dissent.101 In proceeding with her confirmation,
Ramabai had hoped that Geraldine’s assurance that the Holy Spirit would
miraculously convince her of the truth of the Community’s faith would prove
correct.102 But confirmation did not bring the promised flowering of faith and
Ramabai’s confidence in Anglicanism continued to erode.

Sister Geraldine Oct 15, 1885; Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, “St Hilda’s Sunday”
97 Sister Geraldine to Ramabai, Oct 5, 1885; Ramabai to Dorothea Beale,
February–March 1886, Letters and Correspondence, pp 92, 170.
98 Sister Geraldine to Ramabai, Oct 5, 1885; Sister Geraldine to Ramabai, “Bath”
99 Sister Geraldine to Ramabai, Oct 5, 1885, Letters and Correspondence, pp
98-99.
100 Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, “St Hilda’s Sunday” 1885; Ramabai to Sister-
Geraldine, 22nd September 1885, Oct 15, 1885, Letters and Correspondence, pp
152, 89-90, 107-109.
101 Ramabai to Canon Butler, July 3, 1886; Ramabai to Sister Geraldine, Sept,
22, 1885, Letters and Correspondence, pp 74, 88.
102 Ramabai to Sister Geraldine, Oct 15, 1885; September 22, 1885; Sister-
Geraldine to Ramabai, Oct, 5, 1885, Letters and Correspondence, pp 88-89,
98-99, 108.
Geraldine acknowledged that Ramabai doubted central doctrines of Christianity and that a great effort had been made by the Community to answer all her questions before her baptism and during the period of preparation. However, Geraldine was clear that Ramabai did not express any further doubts after entering the catechumenate in July of 1889. 103 But Geraldine’s religious culture did not encourage protracted expressions of doubt, for whilst reasonable doubt was one thing, defiance was considered another. 104 In her defence Ramabai also appealed to cultural differences. She claimed that as a Hindu, she had learned by rote thousands of religious verses and could repeat them on command, but did not necessarily believe them. 105 Nor, she argued, could she accept the authority of the Church if its teaching appeared to transgress the authority of her own conscience. 106 There are interesting connections in Ramabai’s background which suggest that her understanding of conscience might have had deep roots. For instance the role of the saksin in Madhva epistemology is to inwardly testify to truth, a function which is not far removed from Geraldine’s interpretation of the role of the Holy Spirit in confirmation as the one who strengthens faith and who leads the believer into truth (John 16:13). 107 The failure of confirmation to live up to Ramabai’s expectations was a significant contributor to Ramabai’s loss of faith in Anglicanism. She questioned Manoramabai’s decision to be confirmed in the Church of England on the grounds that confirmation did not have biblical authority, nor was it a means of receiving

103 Sister Geraldine to Ramabai, Oct 5, 1885, Letters and Correspondence, pp 94, 98.
104 Geraldine to Ramabai, Oct 5, 1885, Letters and Correspondence, pp 94, 98.
105 Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, “St Hilda’s Sunday” Letters and Correspondence, p 152.
106 Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, “St Hilda’s Sunday,” Letters and Correspondence, p 153.
107 On the role of the saksin in Dvaitin Vedanta see Tapasyananda, Bhakti Schools of Vedanta pp 128-131; Ramachandran, Dvaita Vedanta pp 37-38.
the Holy Spirit.\textsuperscript{108} Eventually holiness theology was able to provide Ramabai with an adequate explanation of her disappointment with confirmation.

Geraldine was only superficially aware of the part played by cultural dissonance in her relationship with Ramabai. Whilst she was willing to accommodate Ramabai’s dietary preferences in general, she believed that her objections to lamb in puddings and pastry was a petulant display of caste pride.\textsuperscript{109} Likewise her struggles with Ramabai over the issue of Anglican authority were largely attributed by her to Ramabai’s intellectual pride or to Nonconformist influence.\textsuperscript{110} More significantly for her relationship with Ramabai, Geraldine was unable to comprehend Ramabai’s deep-seated suspicions of priestcraft and its claim to truth which grew out of her experiences in India.\textsuperscript{111}

To Geraldine, such suspicions were entirely unfounded in an Anglican context, and were further evidence of Ramabai’s pride and arrogance.\textsuperscript{112} Nor was Geraldine initially aware of Ramabai’s fierce drive for personal independence which likewise had its roots in her past and which had led her to leave India in search of greater prospects.\textsuperscript{113} On the contrary, Geraldine’s religious culture regarded dependence as a virtue, a point she made in her complaint to the Bishop of Oxford concerning Ramabai’s tendency to self-will.\textsuperscript{114} However, Geraldine overestimated the political element in Ramabai’s defiance of Anglican

\textsuperscript{108} Mano to Sister Geraldine, (month obscured) 1901, \textit{Notebooks of Geraldine}, (no 7)
\textsuperscript{110} Ramabai to Sister Geraldine, Oct 15, 1885.; Geraldine to Ramabai, January 1886, \textit{Letters and Correspondence}, pp 108-109, 113-115, 400. See also Canon Butler’s letter to Dorothea Beale, July 5, 1886, \textit{Letters and Correspondence}, p 76.
\textsuperscript{111} Ramabai to Sister Geraldine, May 12, 1885; Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, "Friday" 1885, \textit{Letters and Correspondence}, pp 59-60, 134-135.
\textsuperscript{112} Sister Geraldine to Ramabai, Oct 5, \textit{Letters and Correspondence}, p 92.
\textsuperscript{113} Sister Geraldine to Ramabai, May 10, \textit{Letters and Correspondence}, pp 51-53.
\textsuperscript{114} Sister Geraldine to the Lord Bishop, (undated), letter 12, \textit{Letters and Correspondence}, p 29.
authority, that is, Ramabai did not resent the British Raj as much as she
resented British paternalism.\textsuperscript{115} Geraldine was also unable to perceive her own
cultural presuppositions and attitudes, particularly her faith in English cultural
and religious superiority.\textsuperscript{116}

Ramabai's letters throughout 1885 reveal enormous frustration in her
attempts at communication with the CSMV.\textsuperscript{117} As we have discussed, Ramabai
hesitated even in the first year to communicate the depths of her doubts to the
Community. Subsequent to the Sanskrit Debate she was more forthcoming in her
opinions but by and large Dorothea Beale, not Sister Geraldine was her
confidante.\textsuperscript{118} The CSMV failed to create a climate sufficiently conducive to
open communication and thereby allow for repeated expressions of doubt and
disagreement. This was largely due to two factors: its determination to baptize
Ramabai at all costs and its religious culture, which demanded obedience to the
Church as a sign of faith.

\textbf{Faith}

Central to the life of the Community was the mystery of faith itself.
The CSMV believed that doctrines such as the Trinity, the Incarnation or the
deity of Christ could not be adequately explained to the human mind.\textsuperscript{119} These
were in the last resort matters of personal belief, to which the only appropriate
response was acceptance.\textsuperscript{120} Consequently Geraldine did not expect Ramabai to
intellectually comprehend everything about Christianity. As she explained, the

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\textsuperscript{115} See Sister Geraldine's comments in Letters and Correspondence, pp 404-406.
\textsuperscript{116} Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, 8th May 1885; Sister Geraldine, Letters and
Correspondence, 124-125, 340-344.
\textsuperscript{117} Ramabai to Canon Butler, July 3, 1885; Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, Friday
1885, Letters and Correspondence, pp 73-75, 134-135
\textsuperscript{118} Ramabai to Canon Butler, July 3, 1885, Letters and Correspondence, p 73.
\textsuperscript{119} Sister Geraldine to Ramabai, Oct 5, 1885, Letters and Correspondence, pp
91, 95, 97.
\textsuperscript{120} Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, August 15, 1885; Ramabai to Dorothea Beale,
"St Hilda's Sunday, Letters and Correspondence", pp 132, 150-151.
\end{flushleft}
intellect could be an obstacle to truth, whereas faith as an attitude of child-like trust, was not. Rather, she argued, such faith was the key to truth, which could only be found within the Body of Christ, the Church. Geraldine hoped that Ramabai’s submission to the authority and guidance of the Church would be the beginning of a life of faith and the end of all doubt. Neither she nor Canon Butler could comprehend how anyone, least of all a neophyte from a non-Christian background, could presume to question two thousand years of doctrine and tradition.

But Geraldine’s trust in the Church was not shared by many of Ramabai’s evangelical friends, such as Mrs Gilmore, Richard Glover or Isaac Allen. As Baptists, Glover and Allen were particularly critical of Anglican government and authority. Likewise, they had reservations concerning the Church of England’s claim to faithfully represent the teachings of Christ. Similarly they were critical of the Church’s prejudice against individual judgement in matters of faith. Such views, particularly coming from friends whom she deeply respected unsettled Ramabai’s confidence in the CSMV. But Ramabai found such criticisms useful in defending herself against the CSMV’s charge of perjury. In her arguments with Geraldine she set the authority of the Bible against the authority of the Church and challenged Geraldine’s claim that

121 Sister Geraldine to Ramabai, Oct 5, 1886, Letters and Correspondence, pp. 91–92.
122 Sister Geraldine to Ramabai, Oct 5, 1886, Letters and Correspondence, pp 91, 95–97.
123 Geraldine to Ramabai, Oct 5, 1886, Letters and Correspondence, pp 99–100.
124 Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, August 15, 1885; Geraldine to Ramabai, Oct 5, 1886, Letters and Correspondence, pp 132–133, 99.
126 See Glover’s article on Isaac Allen in which he refers negatively to tractarianism. Isaac Allen, The Baptist Handbook, 1911 p 474.
the Church had the right to determine the essentials of the Faith by virtue of its faithfulness to the teachings of Christ. Indeed Ramabai came to demand chapter and verse for every doctrine she doubted.\textsuperscript{128} Whilst Allen and Glover did not express any doubts concerning the divinity of Christ or the doctrine of the Trinity, they and other evangelicals, such as Mrs Gilmore, provided Ramabai with the principle of biblical authority as the means by which to challenge the authority of the Church of England.

Having examined the CSMV's religious culture, evangelistic methods and its expectations of Ramabai, a consideration of the personality of Sister Geraldine is warranted. She played a crucial role in Ramabai's relationship with the Community and in spite of Ramabai's subsequent rejection of Anglicanism, she was able to maintain her relationship with Ramabai throughout her life.

\textbf{Sister Geraldine CSMV}

Julia Geraldine Fuller was born on the 7th June 1843. She entered the Novitiate of the Community of St Mary the Virgin in 1871 and took her final vows on the 2nd December 1873.\textsuperscript{129} She came from a middle-class background. Her family lived at Brighton and were very supportive of her decision to join the Community, often visiting Wantage in company with Geraldine's sister.\textsuperscript{130} Mano was often taken to visit Geraldine's family, addressing Geraldine's parents as Grandfather and Grandmother Fuller.\textsuperscript{131}

In 1883 following her breakdown in India, Geraldine was invalidated back to Wantage where she accepted the position of Guest Mistress. In this position

\textsuperscript{128} Ramabai to Sister Geraldine, July 25, 1885; Ramabai to Canon Butler, July 1885; Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, August 15, 1885, \textit{Letters and Correspondence}, pp 68-69, 80, 131-134.
\textsuperscript{129} Community Records, CSMV Wantage.
\textsuperscript{130} Undated letter from Mano to Geraldine (contents place it towards the end of 1886); Mano to Geraldine, February 26, 1897, \textit{Notebooks of Geraldine} (no 7) Mukti Archives.
\textsuperscript{131} Mano to Geraldine, April 1897, \textit{Notebooks of Geraldine}, no 7.
Ramabai initially came under her care. Geraldine did not fully recover from the events at Poona and never returned to teaching. From 1887 onwards she became involved in journalism, establishing the *St. Mary’s Quarterly Mission Paper* which she edited until 1890. In 1893 she began the monthly mission journal, *The Star in the East*, serving as its editor for twenty years.\(^{132}\)

Geraldine was very much a woman of her social class and race. Unlike Dorothea Beale she was never able to appreciate the significance of gender in Ramabai’s conversion.\(^{133}\) Therefore she could not understand Ramabai’s rejection of episcopal authority. In Geraldine’s religious milieu, obedience was the requirement of a holy life. For her it added a spiritual dimension to the accepted role of women as one of submission. Whilst Ramabai had considerable experience in rejecting narrow interpretations of women’s place in society, Geraldine’s answer to Ramabai’s criticism of female subordination was to resort to the authority of the Church, scripture or John Ruskin.\(^{134}\)

As Guest Mistress, Geraldine was the initial contact between the Community and members of the public. After Ramabai’s baptism the CSMV added to her duties by appointing her Ramabai’s spiritual director.\(^{135}\) There was a tradition of spiritual direction at Wantage stemming from the foundation of the Community.\(^{136}\) Both Keble and Pusey were well known as confessors and spiritual directors and Keble was welcome at Wantage, if Pusey was not.\(^{137}\)

\(^{132}\) *Community Records, CSMV Wantage.*
\(^{133}\) *Dorothea Beale to Sister Geraldine May 8, 1884, Letters and Correspondence,* p 49.
\(^{134}\) *Geraldine to Ramabai, May 10, 1886; Oct 5, 1886; Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, "Summer Vacation" 1886, Letters and Correspondence,* pp 63-64, 99, 134-135.
\(^{135}\) *Geraldine to Ramabai, Oct 5, 1886, Letters and Correspondence* p 100.
\(^{136}\) Archdeacon Manning was Elizabeth Lockhart’s director as Butler was Harriet’s.
\(^{137}\) Pusey borrowed heavily from Roman Catholicism both in respect to devotional manuals and to its tradition of spiritual guidance, which concerned Wilberforce. See Keith Denison, *"Dr. Pusey as Confessor and Spiritual Director" in Butler, Pusey Rediscovered* pp 223-224; Chadwick, *The Victorian Church* Part 1, pp 509-510; Hill, *The Religious Order* pp 222-223.
The role of spiritual director was to admonish, advise, encourage, inspire and if the director was a priest to hear the confession of the disciple. As will become evident, Geraldine exercised her role in the manner of a novice mistress and expected Ramabai to behave accordingly, a point which the bishop of Bombay eventually drew to her attention.\textsuperscript{138} Ramabai was therefore in an awkward position. On the one hand she was a young convert needing further instruction in the faith but on the other hand Geraldine expected from her the commitment and unquestioning obedience of a postulant. As an example, Ramabai was expected to ask Geraldine's permission before she saw friends or undertook new ventures and generally to consult with Geraldine on anything affecting her life, spiritual or temporal.\textsuperscript{139} For her part, Geraldine checked the regularity of Ramabai's attendance at Church and confession, advised her on what she should and should not read and attempted unsuccessfully to monitor her correspondence; all of which Ramabai came to regard as an infringement of her personal liberty.\textsuperscript{140}

\textsuperscript{138} Bishop Mylne to Sister Geraldine, June 5, 1885, \textit{Letters and Correspondence} pp 56-57.
\textsuperscript{139} Geraldine to Dorothea Beale, May 10, 1885, \textit{Letters and Correspondence} p 54.
\textsuperscript{140} Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, May 8, 1885, Geraldine to Dorothea, May 10, 1885; Geraldine to Ramabai, Oct 5, 1885; Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, "St Hilda's Sunday" \textit{Letters and Correspondence} pp 54, 92-93, 124-125, 153.
Anandabai Bhagat

Anandabai Bhagat accompanied Ramabai to England in order to train as a teacher. She had already undertaken some training, possibly in a government school or mission, which together with the fact she had her family's permission to make the journey to England, makes it reasonable to conclude that she was a Brahmo. Given the tradition of early marriage amongst caste Hindus, she was most likely a widow, as there is no mention in her letter of a husband, only of her brothers. One of Anandabai's brothers lived at Poona and was possibly associated with the Prarthana Samaj, an association known for its stricter adherence to Hindu tradition and culture than the more liberal Brahmo Samaj of India. But the family village may well have been Wanouri. Adhav suggests that the "Master" to whom Anandabai wrote her final letter may well have been a teacher at the Church of Scotland Mission in Poona, given her reference to a Mrs Mitchell who was the founder of that mission.

It is probable therefore that Anandabai had already experienced studying at a mission school but had successfully resisted conversion, perhaps with the assistance of her brother in Poona. Whilst we cannot be sure what her previous

141 Anandabai Bhagat had come to study at the teachers' training College, possibly St Michael's at Wantage. Sister Geraldine, Letters and Correspondence p 9.
142 Anandabai to "Master", (undated) Letters and Correspondence p 13.
143 Anandabai to Master, Letters and Correspondence pp 12-13.
144 Anandabai to Master, Letters and Correspondence p 13; Sister Geraldine, Letters and Correspondence p 9; Members of the Prarthana Samaj retained their caste and many traditional customs. M. G. Ranade's acceptance of penance as a result of the "Panch Howd Tea-Party" as well as his marriage to a child bride in spite of his reform ideals are relevant examples. On Ranade's participation in the "Panch Howd Tea Party" see James Kellock, Mahadev Govind Ranade, Association Press Calcutta 1926, pp 104-108. On the conservatism of the Prarthana Samaj see Kof, The Brahmo Samaj pp 321-322.
145 Anandabai to Master, Letters and Correspondence p 12.
146 See Adhav's note, Letters and Correspondence p 13.
experience of Christian evangelism may have been, what we do know is that in August of 1889 she became acutely distressed at the thought of Ramabai's impending baptism and fearing that she too would succumb to pressure to convert to Christianity committed suicide.\(^{147}\)

The tragedy of Anandabai Bhagat raises the possibility of there having been undue pressure exercised in the CSMV's evangelistic methods. Missionaries by the nature of their work are zealous for the conversion of souls; the CSMV was no exception. Motivated by its desire to achieve success in India and its belief that the unsaved were condemned to hell, the Community used every avenue of persuasion.\(^{148}\) Initially it relied upon argument to facilitate Ramabai's conversion but as Canon Butler explained in his annual report argument had proved largely ineffectual.\(^{149}\) Influence was likewise a strategy and Nehemiah Goreh and the work at St James Fulham proved a particularly effective combination. Success appears therefore to have come from a combination of influences; it also came from a degree of pressure. Whilst there is no evidence to describe the pressure brought to bear on Anandabai and Ramabai as coercion, there is evidence which suggests that the CSMV exerted a high degree of group pressure and possible emotional manipulation.\(^{150}\)

The intensity of the Community's expectations for the conversion of

\(^{147}\) Mother Harriet to the Exterior Sisters, September 1, 1883, Letters and Correspondence p 11.
\(^{148}\) Whilst belief in hell was declining in late Victorian England, the religious conservatism of the CSMV and its commitment to the Athanasian Creed precluded its departure from that teaching. See Stock, History of the CMS Vol 3, 1889 on the commitment of leading tractarians such as Pusey and Liddon to the Athanasian Creed p 4. On the decline in the belief in hell during this period, see Hugh McLeod, Class and Religion in the Late Victorian City, pp 215-216, 226-227.
Ramabai can be seen in its haste to elicit a decision from her regarding baptism in little more than a month after her arrival. On that occasion she felt obliged to provide an explanation to the chaplain for a delay in her decision.\textsuperscript{151} As we have seen Ramabai’s conversion was viewed as having enormous potential for the work of the Church in India.\textsuperscript{152} Her reputation, which had preceded her to England, created interest in her from many quarters, to the concern of the CSMV.\textsuperscript{153} Daily prayers were said inside and outside the Community for Ramabai’s conversion and there were constant enquiries as to the current situation. The link which had been forged by the CSMV between conversion and Ramabai’s ambitions for the social “uplift” of Indian women was a compelling incentive to her to convert as it was a compelling incentive to the CSMV to convert her.\textsuperscript{154}

Anandabai shared Ramabai’s desire for the amelioration of Hindu women.\textsuperscript{155} After Ramabai had made her decision to accept baptism much of her time was spent receiving religious instruction from Canon Butler. During this period Ramabai was still at an elementary stage in her understanding of English and partially deaf in one ear;\textsuperscript{156} In a letter to her family, Anandabai described her own knowledge of English as being inferior to Ramabai’s.\textsuperscript{157} Her means of communication with the Community were therefore poor and consequently she would have been very dependent upon Ramabai for information and support.

Reference has already been made to Butler’s personality. It has been

\textsuperscript{151} Sister Geraldine to Ramabai, Oct 5 1885, \textit{Letters and Correspondence} p 98.
\textsuperscript{152} Sister Eleanor, 28th December 1882, Wantage Archives.
\textsuperscript{153} Letter from Sister Geraldine to Dorothea Beals, 18th December 1883, \textit{Letters and Correspondence} pp 21-22.
\textsuperscript{154} The link had been established by Sister Eleanor in her letter of the 28th December 1882 to the Community.
\textsuperscript{155} Anandabai to Master, \textit{Letters and Correspondence} p 12.
\textsuperscript{156} Ramabai’s deafness was due to malaria. See Ramabai’s letter to Geraldine, February 14, 1886, \textit{Letters and Correspondence} p 116.
\textsuperscript{157} Anandabai to Master, \textit{Letters and Correspondence} p 14.
established that Ramabai found him intimidating and she admitted that he was a
factor in her reluctance to confide in the CSMV. 158 Evidence has also been
provided regarding Butler’s expectations that those in his care would defer to
his wishes. Added confirmation of this was provided by Ramabai in her complaint
to Dorothea Beale that the Canon always expected total agreement with his point
of view. 159 On more than one occasion Ramabai complained that Butler refused
to speak to her unless she was sufficiently “humble” in her demeanour. 160
Butler’s correspondence concerning Ramabai revealed a man with little patience
for those whom he considered to be following a wrong course of action. Amongst
his characteristics was a fondness for proverbs or pithy sayings, many of which
he coined himself. One of his favourites, which may well owe its origins to
Ramabai, and if not she certainly confirmed it to him, was “Proud and vain
lassies are those who go wrong.” 161 Butler therefore, was not a man whom
people would lightly disappoint, particularly two vulnerable women who were
financially and emotionally dependent upon his hospitality. The climate created by
Butler and intensified by the method of encapsulation which he espoused was not
conducive to open communication and the only support he appeared prepared to
offer the women was conditional upon their baptism.

Anandabai and Ramabai were foreigners in a strange country,
amongst people of a different culture in an unfamiliar climate. They had many
adjustments to make, not least to one another. In spite of their journey together
there were tensions between them over the differences in their castes.

158 Ramabai to Beale, August 15, 1885, Letters and Correspondence, pp
131-134. He was not the only factor, Ramabai stated that the sisters also
became unsympathetic. See Ramabai’s letter to Dorothea Beale, “Friday” 1885,
Letters and Correspondence p 135.
159 Ramabai to Canon Butler, July 3, 1885; Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, August 15
1885, “Friday” 1885, Letters and Correspondence, pp 79-75, 131-132, 134.
160 Ramabai to Canon Butler, July 3 1885; Canon Butler to Dorothea Beale, July
5, 1885; Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, August 15, 1885, Letters and
Correspondence pp 75, 76-77, 131-132.
161 Sister Geraldine, A Story of a Diverted Hope p 44.
According to Sister Geraldine, it was a matter of some concern to Anandabai. Similarly there were problems with food. Ramabai insisted upon them both remaining strict vegetarians, which allowed Anandabai to assure her friends in India that her diet had not been compromised. Complicating an already difficult situation were the language difficulties experienced by both women, and the hours of language study required to prepare them for admission to the English educational system. Ramabai's partial deafness placed her at a disadvantage during her preparation for baptism and confirmation and in addition to her other concerns she had the demands of a two-year-old child to meet. Whilst the women were not expected to keep all the canonical hours, they were expected to join some of the services. Living in a monastic community in which every part of the day was ordered and where silence was an integral part of the Community's discipline would likewise have been a difficult adjustment.

There was considerable fear associated with overseas travel within Hindu culture during the nineteenth century. Leaving one's country constituted a dereliction of religious duty resulting in the excommunication of the traveller from his or her caste and requiring a ceremony of purification and of penance before any reinstatement could occur. During the journey itself there were concerns with cultic pollution, sickness and death, particularly death,

163 Anandabai to Master, (undated) Geraldine to Ramabai October 5, 1885, *Letters and Correspondence* pp 13-14, 100-101
164 Ananada to Master, (undated) *Letters and Correspondence* p 14; June 1, 1882 Monthly Letters of the CSMV.
165 Ramabai's hearing deteriorated during her stay in England. In 1882 Sister Eleanor's letter of December 28 described her as being only "slightly deaf"
166 Sister Geraldine to Ramabai, Oct 5, 1885, *Letters and Correspondence* p 100.
167 Ramabai, *The High-Caste Hindu Woman* p xviii
and whether the correct rites would be performed so as to placate the ancestors as well as the gods. There were also fears that away from their supporting networks, Hindus would come under increasing pressure from Christians to convert to Christianity. Anandabai Bhagat felt enormous pressure to convert, and unlike Ramabai she had little confidence in herself. 169 She would have been well aware that Hindus who became Christians were cut off from family and friends, that is they became outcasts. 170 Her conversion would therefore have led to social repercussions familiar to caste Hindus.

Christianity is an exclusive religion demanding unqualified loyalty and all but a few Protestant missionaries in 19th century India were fearful of syncretism. 171 Indian converts to Christianity were also fearful, fearful of losing their culture as well as their families. 172 While the loss of social approval was a considerable burden to bear, even harder was the loss of loved ones. Ramabai had less to lose than Anandabai in this respect. She had already lost caste through her marriage to Bipin Behari Das Medhavi. Although she had relatives in Karnataka, after the death of Shrinivas and Bipin Behari she had led a relatively independent life, albeit under male protection. 173 Her friends in the Brahmo Samaj movement were regularly in touch and her correspondence with them did not abate with her baptism, although from Maharashtra there were reports of threats on her life signalling societal disapproval of her

171 Hefner, "The Rationality of Conversion" Conversion to Christianity p 23. On the reclamation of Hindu culture by Indian Christians, see for example Keshari Nandan Sahay, Christianity and Culture Change in India, Inter-India Publications, New Delhi 1986, pp 47-48, 304 ff.
172 Oddie, "Brahmans and Christian Conversion" Hindu and Christian in South-East India, pp 146-150.
173 "Notes of Conversations with Ramabai" C.L.C.M. September 1884, p 120.
conversion. Consequently the social ramifications which baptism inflicted upon converts such as loss of caste and social ostracism, had largely been dealt with by Ramabai, whilst her presence in England ensured her removal from physical abuse. This is not to make light of the obvious grief involved in separating from one religious community, its aspirations and values, in favour of another, only that in comparison with the experience of other converts, for example Nehemiah Goreh, Ramabai escaped lightly. On the other hand, she remonstrated with Butler that he had no idea what was involved in changing one's religion to one so "totally foreign" and undoubtedly she may well have had Anandabai Bhagat in mind as much as herself.

In Anandabai's last letter to India there were unmistakable signs of homesickness in her mention of three letters to her brothers which had gone unanswered. Although she stressed how grateful she was to be given a chance to further the cause of women's education, the level of pressure on her, particularly since Ramabai's submission, had apparently become unbearable.

On the 14th August 1883, Anandabai committed suicide. Only a few days earlier, according to Mother Harriet, she had agreed to be baptized. After Anandabai's death, Geraldine accused Ramabai of being insensitive to her friend's situation and of choosing a companion who, in the light of subsequent events proved entirely unsuitable. Yet Geraldine, if she was aware of Anandabai's depression, did little about it. As she stated in reference to her own breakdown in India, it was customary in those days to regard mental

174 "St Hilda's Sunday" letter from Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, Letters and Correspondence p 153.
176 Ramabai to Butler, July 3, 1885, Letters and Correspondence pp 72-76.
177 Undated letter from Anandabai to Master, Letters and Correspondence pp 11-14.
178 Mother Harriet to the Exterior Sisters, September 1 1883, Letters and Correspondence p 11.
179 Sister Geraldine, Letters and Correspondence p 9.
distress as a form of indulgence, curable by discipline and hard work. A similar attitude may have been adopted towards Anandabai, although Geraldine appeared to lay much of the blame on Ramabai, accusing her of neglect.

Anandabai’s death was reported in The Bombay Gazette. There she was described as “subject to occasional attacks of temporary excitement.” The article went on to state:

“On the evening of the 13th August, she was seized by an attack of unusual violence, which continued during the night. On the morning of the 14th, she took advantage of the absence of Ramabai (sic) from the room to open the box of the latter and abstract a bottle of hydro-chloric acid (which was kept by the Pundita for external use) and swallow the contents. Doctors were called in and every remedy applied, but in vain, and the unfortunate woman, sinking into a state of insensibility breathed her last towards evening.”

Max Müller asserted that Anandabai was intent upon an act of murder/suicide and tried to strangle Ramabai, presumably on the night of the 13th in an attempt to save them both from baptism and when that failed took her own life. An examination of the circumstances reveals that Ramabai and Mano were removed from the room they shared with Anandabai following the attack on the 13th. Why Anandabai was left alone in such a condition continues to be a mystery. Whatever the circumstances she awoke alone on the morning of the 14th and poisoned herself with hydrochloric acid. During the afternoon of the 14th, the CSMV sent for the Chaplain of the Community; Anandabai was baptized on her death-bed and subsequently buried in the Parish cemetery. Whether Anandabai Bhagat had a history of psychological illness prior to her arrival in England or whether the Bombay Gazette as a Christian journal

180 Sister Geraldine, Letters and Correspondence p 5.
181 Sister Geraldine, Letters and Correspondence p 9.
182 “Suicide of a Native Lady in England” Bombay Gazette, September 10, 1883 p 2.
183 F. Max Müller, Auld Lang Syne: “My Indian Friends”, p 141.
184 “Suicide of a Native Lady in England” Bombay Gazette Sept 10, 1883 p 2.
185 Mother Harriet, to the Exterior Sisters, September 1, 1883; Ramabai to Geraldine, April 20, 1888, Letters and Correspondence pp 11, 212.
exaggerated her symptoms it is not possible to say. If she was as unstable as
the report indicated, it reveals a lack of judgement in Ramabai’s choice of a
companion, a point Geraldine was quick to make. It may also explain why
Dorothea Beale later refused to sponsor a young Indian woman to England on
Ramabai’s recommendation.

According to Mrs Max Müller it was not until October of 1883 that
Ramabai came to stay with them at Oxford. At least six weeks after
Anandabai’s suicide Max Müller could still describe Ramabai as extremely anx¬
ious and unable to sleep in a room alone presumably for fear of being haunted by
Anandabai’s ghost. But he also observed that Ramabai appeared still anx¬
ious to fulfil the expectations of the Community. Although Max Müller did not
particularly approve of Ramabai’s baptism (he had not seen the necessity), his
account describes a woman under a great degree of stress. Almost twelve
months later Dorothea Beale wrote to the Bishop of Bombay that Ramabai still
suffered from nervous tension as a result of the events of the previous year.
Sister Geraldine attributed Ramabai’s anxiety to guilt as a result of
Anandabai’s death and added that she made great use of the sacrament of
penance at that time. As a result of the tragedy Ramabai resolved to
reimburse Anandabai’s brothers for the expenses incurred in their sister’s

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186 Sister Geraldine, Letters and Correspondence, p 9.
187 Dorothea Beale, to Bishop Myln, May 22, 1884; Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, spring/summer of 1885, Letters and Correspondence pp 40-41,118-119.
188 Mrs Max Müller, (ed) The Life and Letters of the Honourable Friedrich Max
189 Max Müller, Auld Lang Syne: “My Indian Friends” p 141.
190 Letter from Max Müller, to Judith Andrews, 27th January 1895, Annual
191 Letter from Max Müller to Judith Andrews, January 27, 1895,
192 Dorothea Beale to Bishop Myln, May 22, 1894, Letters and Correspondence
p 40.
193 Sister Geraldine, Letters and Correspondence, note p 14.
journey to England.\textsuperscript{194}

Ramabai had been corresponding with Max Müller prior to coming to England, and given the close proximity of Wantage to Oxford she may have already met him during the first few months of her arrival.\textsuperscript{195} His comments confirm both Geraldine and Dorothea's observations about Ramabai's state of mind during this period. After noting her anxiety following the death of Anandabai, he also remarked on the sudden deterioration in her hearing. Max Müller wrote,

"After all arrangements had been made to enable her to attend medical lectures at Oxford, her hearing became suddenly so much affected that she had to give up all idea of a medical career."\textsuperscript{196}

\textsuperscript{194} The Bhagat family also held Ramabai responsible for Anandabai’s death. She paid the debt to the family in installments. Sister Geraldine, \textit{Notebook, 2, postscripts to correspondence with Ramabai dated, April 7, May 20, 1887.}

\textsuperscript{195} Anandabai described a three day visit to London, possibly the occasion of Ramabai’s visit to Fulham. Anandabai, \textit{Letter to Master, Letters and Correspondence p 12.} Although a tramway existed from Wantage to Wantage Rd from 1875, Oxford was the nearest major interchange.

\textsuperscript{196} Max Müller, \textit{My Indian Friends, p 141.}
The CSMV and its Methods of Persuasion.

Chana Ullman in her description of the methods used by members of some new religious movements to secure conversion highlights many of the problems and difficulties faced by both Anandabai Bhagat and Ramabai in their experience of the CSMV.197 This is not to suggest that the Community at that time deserved to be labelled a cult much less a "totalistic" community, but it exhibited similar traits, among them the isolation of potential converts, the cultivation of their emotional dependence, the intensity of instruction and a high degree of group pressure. Lewis Rambo also notes the use of encapsulation as a strategy in conversion, identifying three common examples: physical, ideological and social.198 The purpose of encapsulation is to encase a potential convert in the belief system and practices of a religious group for the purpose of affecting a conversion through various forms of group pressure including intensive instruction, ritual, and group activities. 199 Encapsulating a potential convert also removes him or her from competing influences thereby strengthening the influence of the group.200 At the same time the attention lavished upon the potential convert affirms his or her value to the group. It has already been noted that encapsulation was a strategy favoured by the CSMV. In its invitation to Ramabai and Anandabai to accept its hospitality in England the Community was (whilst meeting the needs of the Indian women) engaging in such a strategy.

Encapsulation

Sister Eleanor's letter indicated the desirability of removing Ramabai to England in order to place her in an environment more conducive to conversion.

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198 Rambo, Understanding Conversion pp 106-107.
199 On the use of ritual to increase the solidarity of the group see, F. R. Lynch, "Toward a Theory of Conversion and Commitment to the Occult" Richardson (ed) Conversion Careers pp 107,109
By its very nature the CSMV was a community which had partly withdrawn from the world. Although the CSMV is situated within the environs of Wantage, for two Indian women without family or friends in England the Community was to all intents and purposes isolated. Whilst visitors to the Community were not discouraged both Anandabai and Ramabai were largely secluded during the initial months. Visitors were permitted but monitored and when Ramabai left the Community she was always accompanied by one or more of the sisters. This was partly due to the Community's desire to protect their guests from a great deal of unwelcome interest and partly a recognition of their unfamiliarity with the environment. The fact that Anandabai and Ramabai were separated from their families and supporting networks meant they were largely dependent upon each other for emotional support. However, Ramabai's response to Christianity and the development of her relationship with Geraldine may well have affected Anandabai's emotional stability. Certainly the attention of the Community was on Ramabai much more than on her companion. After Ramabai had made her decision to be baptized Anandabai was alone in resisting the pressures of the CSMV. And whilst it can be concluded that Ramabai was actively seeking conversion, a similar conclusion cannot be drawn with respect to Anandabai, so little is known of her.

**The Intensity of Instruction**

The CSMV was intensive in its methods of instruction as Butler’s methods with Harriet demonstrated. Coupled with encapsulation the intensive instruction added to the build up of pressure and the expectation of a positive

201 Geraldine was anxious for Ramabai to develop the desire for a "hidden life" and consequently to discourage any attention to herself. See Geraldine’s letter to Dorothea Beale, 18th December 1883, Letters and Correspondence pp 21-22.
202 Sister Geraldine to Dorothea Beale, 18th December 1883, Letters and Correspondence, pp 21-22.
203 On the subject of group pressure, see Ullman, The Transformed Self pp 91, 97-98.
response. At the same time the religious culture of the Community discouraged any disagreement with its views. The pressure on both Anandabai and Ramabai to suppress any objections they might have had increased their emotional vulnerability. A further factor in the dynamics of the CSMV’s religious culture was the creation of an attitude of dependence upon authority. The primary authority was God but the CSMV regarded the Church as the corporeal expression of that authority. The Indian women were encouraged to commit their eternal welfare to the Church and to depend upon it for the maintenance of their salvation. Apart from their spiritual dependency the women were financially dependent upon the Community for their daily needs. The CSMV’s cultivation of the women’s dependence in an already powerless situation was a factor which too easily lent itself to subtle and not so subtle emotional manipulation.

However, religious culture was only one of many components in the dynamics of the situation. Gender expectations espoused by Butler and Geraldine also played their part in inhibiting any expressions of disagreement, whilst difficulties of language likewise disadvantaged the women. Similarly, racial attitudes were important components in the relationship between the Indian women and their British hosts, as Ramabai inferred in her letter of the 8th of May to Dorothea Beale. In view of the strength of Ramabai’s identification of elements of racial superiority and paternalism within the CSMV and the Anglican Church, the presence of such attitudes must also be acknowledged as a factor contributing to the vulnerability of the women in their initial months in England.

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204 Ibid, p 91.
205 Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, 8th May 1885, Letters and Correspondence pp 124-125. See also Canon Butler’s letter to Dorothea Beale, June 15, 1885, Letters and Correspondence, p 45.
206 Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, May 8, 1885, Letters and Correspondence pp 124-125.
The tragedy of Anandabai Bhagat highlighted the determination of the CSMV to secure the conversion of both women. Their vulnerability which was apparent in their financial and emotional dependence upon the Community and their total lack of familiarity with their environment would not have required excessive pressure, let alone coercion, for the Community to have secured its goal. The constant atmosphere of expectation and the unfamiliarity of the environment, cultural and physical, created its own pressures. Nor can the personality of Canon Butler, reinforced by the zeal of Sister Geraldine, be overlooked as contributing factors to the maintenance of pressure. The zeal of the Community was also evident in its insensitivity to Anandabai’s distress and in its decision to baptize her upon her death-bed. Yet in defence of the CSMV it is important to acknowledge that it was convinced that if it had failed to baptize Anandabai, her soul would have been eternally lost. Understandably Ramabai was particularly distressed following the tragedy, so much so that shock contributed to a rapid loss in her hearing and to her continual anxiety throughout the following twelve months, factors which explain her reluctance to be more direct with the CSMV during that period. 207

207 Sister Geraldine to Dorothea Beale, 18th December 1883, Letters and Correspondence pp 21-22.
Chapter 6: An English Education.

Any thought of a medical career for Ramabai had to be abandoned following the sudden deterioration in her hearing as a result of the death of Anandabai Bhagat. School teaching appeared to be an alternative choice. Acting on Ramabai's behalf, Sister Geraldine requested Dorothea Beale, Lady Principal of The Cheltenham Ladies College, to accept Ramabai as a student teacher.¹ The Ladies' College had a reputation as one of the more progressive girls' schools in nineteenth century England.²

Dorothea, who came from a middle-class intellectual background, proved to be Ramabai's confidante during her difficulties with the CSMV over Anglican doctrine and authority.³ She had experienced a protracted period of doubt three times in her life and was much more sympathetic to Ramabai's differences with the CSMV than Geraldine.⁴ Her own experience had been sympathetically treated and was not forgotten. The turning point for Dorothea in her experience of depression was meeting the Reverend Rowland Corbet of

¹ Sister Geraldine to Dorothea Beale, 18th December 1883, Letters and Correspondence, pp 21-22.
³ Her father was Dr Miles Beale. Beale and his wife were both very involved with various educational programmes in London and their household was a hive of intellectual activity. See Clarke, op.cit., p 33; Elizabeth Raikes, op.cit., p 20; Margaret P. O. Kerr, The Work and Influence of Dorothea Beale in the Light of Developments in the Education of Girls and Women since 1850, M. A. Thesis, London University, (unpublished), The Cheltenham Ladies' College Archives, p 2-3.
Stokes in Shropshire. He convened a group which had similar experiences to
Dorothea and whilst some had emerged from doubt to a greatly strengthened
faith, others like her were finding their way. 5 In fact Dorothea’s support and
non condemnatory attitude towards Ramabai was born of her own experience of
Corbet’s ministry. 6 Consequently she did not dismiss Ramabai’s difficulties as
indicative of ignorance or disobedience but treated her seriously and
sympathetically.

Dorothea’s experience as a single woman and an ambitious one created
a rapport between herself and Ramabai. 7 She had been one of the first
students at Queens College, London, under the principalship of F. D. Maurice and
one of its first lady tutors in mathematics. 8 Whilst she had been influenced by
Evangelicalism in that she was serious about the state of her soul and kept a
personal diary of her spiritual progress, 9 by the mid eighteen hundreds she was
firmly in sympathy with moderate expressions of high church dogma and
ceremonial. 10 Her brother Edward joined the Society of St John the Evangelist
and went out to India in 1884 and Dorothea herself harboured an ambition for
many years to found a female teaching order. 11 However, Cheltenham as a
parish was suspicious of high church innovations, possibly due to its large
evangelical contingent and when Dorothea introduced “quiet days” and retreats
at the Ladies’ College she was very circumspect both in her description of those

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5 Dorothea’s letter to an unidentified friend quoted in Raikes, Dorothea Beale of
Cheltenham p 196.
6 Dorothea Beale to unidentified friend, quoted in Raikes, op.cit., p 196.
7 Miles Beale was very supportive of his daughter’s desire for a meaningful life
and of her resolve to remain single in order to achieve her ambitions. See
Raikes, op.cit., pp 20, 30; Clarke, op.cit., pp 39-34.
8 Raikes, op.cit., pp 17, 23; Clarke, op.cit., p 95
10 Dorothea Beale to Ramabai, April 1885, Letters and Correspondence, p 122.
See also her letter to Penrice Bell in 1868 in which she indicates her dislike of
confessions and of excessive ceremonial.
11 Raikes, op.cit., pp 251, 422.
events and in her choice of speakers. She preferred both for reasons of politics and for personal choice to invite her retreat directors from Cambridge. Archbishop Benson's comment that the Cambridge school of theology was more life affirming and less sin consumed than Oxford, may well have persuaded her in that choice, particularly in light of her then recent experience of religious doubt.

Dorothea's appointment as Lady Principal of Cheltenham Ladies College in 1858 had been partly due to her disavowal of identification with any one party within the Church of England and her expectation that Cheltenham was free of such prejudices. She remained Principal until her death in 1906. The founders of The Cheltenham Ladies' College were deeply concerned not to associate the school with any particular party but rather to cultivate a reputation of moderation in education and religion. They wisely courted the support of Francis Close, Rector of Cheltenham and well known evangelical preacher and sabbatarian. A priority for the School Council therefore, was to choose a Lady Principal who would represent moderation in the eyes of prospective parents, particularly as her duties included the teaching of divinity. No one on the Council wanted a person of extreme party views because the success of the school depended upon it having a wide appeal.

Dorothea belonged to that wide body of Anglicans who distrusted extremism and whose piety was largely formed by Bible and Prayer Book. Her

13 Ibid, p 290.
15 Dorothea Beale, to Penrice Bell, July 12, 1858
16 Clarke, A History of the Cheltenham Ladies College p 86.
17 Ibid, p 23.
18 Dorothea Beale to Penrice Bell, July 12 1858, Beale Correspondence; Clarke, op.cit., p 23; David W. F. Forrester, "Dr Pusey's Marriage" in Butler (ed) Pusey Rediscovered p 139.
19 Raikes, Dorothea Beale of Cheltenham pp 75-76.
20 Ibid, p 42.
dismissal from Casteron, the evangelical clergy daughters’ school, had been due to her alleged belief in baptismal regeneration. However, an examination of her letter to the Cheltenham School Council disclosed that her theology of baptism was derived essentially from the Prayer Book and her understanding of the meaning of "baptismal regeneration" included the responsibility of the catechumen to remain faithful to his or her baptismal vows.

Dorothea was ideally suited to Cheltenham both in her theology and in her philosophy of education. The council was largely composed of men who desired to improve the quality of female education, to offer a curriculum of substance rather than the traditional one of "accomplishments". On the other hand, they were conservative men, who did not want to overturn societal expectations of womanhood. In Dorothea Beale they found a sympathetic nature. In 1868 she too was moderately conservative but equally committed to a "real" education for women. In 1865 she addressed the Social Science Congress pleading for an education which would develop the moral character of boys and girls. During her speech she affirmed her belief in the subordination of women as one of divine revelation but she complained that the education of girls had been too "showy" and not "real" or "useful". Education she believed ought to develop "judgement" and "discipline, habits, studies and occupations as will brace the

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21 In defence of his daughter’s dismissal from Casterton, Miles Beale had written that he had no idea that the denial of baptismal regeneration was a condition of employment at Casterton. See Raikes, op.cit., p 53.
22 Dorothea Beale to Perrice Bell, July 12, 1868, Beale Correspondence. Mr Bell described Dorothea’s views on baptism as “distinctive”. See Bell’s reply to Dorothea, July 13, 1868, Beale Correspondence CLC. This may be due to the fact that her biblical references in support of her view on baptism, such as Ephesians 5:25; Titus 3:5, need to be read in conjunction with the Sacrament of Baptism and Order of Confirmation in BCP, plus the following Articles of Faith, 6, 16, 27 in order to follow her line of thought.
23 In 1868 Dorothea published the Students' Textbook of English and General History. It was criticized as being historically biased against women and ignorant of their contribution to society. Yet by the end of the century Dorothea’s views had changed considerably and she was elected vice-president of the Central Society for Women’s Suffrage. Raikes, op.cit., pp 62, 309.
mind, improve the taste and develop the moral character." It was Dorothea's good fortune, therefore, that whilst she led she never outgrew the support of the Council and consequently the reputation of The Cheltenham Ladies' College steadily came to represent progressive but quality education upheld by moderately conservative middle class values. In 1894 when Ramabai was admitted as a student/teacher of the college, Dorothea Beale was approaching the height of her reputation. The school had expanded with additional new buildings and a kindergarten department employing the Froebel method had been added. 25

The Cheltenham Ladies' College had been founded to cater for those women "whose influence as they grew to womanhood, was wide and pervasive." 26 A particular class of young women was envisaged; girls whose prospects would not require them to work for a living and whose future husbands could be reasonably expected to occupy positions of considerable influence at home or overseas. 27 Eventually such assumptions altered in line with changing social attitudes and the College reflected with the foundation of its St Hilda institutions. St Hilda's Cheltenham was established as a centre of advanced studies, including teacher education and training, while St Hilda's Hall Oxford was founded as a women's college of the University. 28

In preparing for admittance to Cheltenham, Ramabai had many adjustments to make. Her first year in England had been largely devoted to achieving fluency in spoken and written English. She had also begun to use a hearing trumpet as an aid to her disability. 29 It was during this period that she attempted to conform her religious beliefs to the expectations of the Community.

24 Raikes, op.cit., pp 119,147.
26 Ibid, p 18.
28 Ibid, pp 46-47.
29 Ibid, p 73.
and her initial success was reflected in the approval of both Geraldine and Butler.\textsuperscript{30} Her attendance at confession and at the eucharist was regular and she entertained the possibility of establishing a native sisterhood in India as a daughter house of the CSMV; all of which reinforced the Community's belief that Ramabai had embraced the teachings of the Church, that her conversion had been genuine.\textsuperscript{31} The CSMV's decision to send her to Cheltenham was due to its desire to give her the experience of a broad general education amongst women of a comparable social class and to expose her to the latest methods in teaching. However, it is also possible that the CSMV's choice of Cheltenham was equally motivated by Dorothea Beale's extensive range of social contacts.\textsuperscript{32}

In sending Ramabai to Cheltenham the Community would have been well aware of Dorothea's extensive contacts and the possibilities to which they might lead.\textsuperscript{33} Nor was it to be disappointed. Within three months of Ramabai's commencement at Cheltenham, Dorothea had informed the Prime Minister, William Gladstone, of Ramabai's history and ambitions. He continued his interest in her throughout her period in England and subsequently arranged financial support for her through the Queen's Bounty Fund.\textsuperscript{34} Gladstone's sister, Helen, also joined Ramabai at the 1885 retreat conducted at the College.\textsuperscript{35}

\textsuperscript{30} Sister Geraldine, \textit{Letters and Correspondence} p 397.
\textsuperscript{31} Sister Geraldine, \textit{Letters and Correspondence} p 397; Canon Butler to Dorothea Beale, June 18, 1884, \textit{Letters and Correspondence} pp 45-46.
\textsuperscript{32} Sister Geraldine, \textit{Letters and Correspondence} pp 21, 398. The CSMV had its own pupil\textbackslash teacher scheme within its system of national schools. See Norton, \textit{A History of the Community of St Mary the Virgin, Wantage}, pp 47-53.
\textsuperscript{33} Beale also had Ramabai engaged in writing her apologia for various people as well as sending various articles to the Indian papers on a wide range of subjects. See Dorothea Beale's letter to the Bishop of Bombay, May 22nd 1884, \textit{Letters and Correspondence} p 40; Ramabai to Dorothea 30th May 1884, \textit{Letters and Correspondence} p 118.
\textsuperscript{34} "Hawarden Castle, Chester, December 26, 1884, William Gladstone to Miss Dorothea Beale, \textit{Beale Correspondence}, Cheltenham Ladies College; Dorothea Beale to Sister Geraldine, Jan 9, 1885, \textit{Letters and Correspondence}, pp 30-31.
\textsuperscript{35} Dorothea Beale to Mrs Grey, August 5, 1885, published in Rakesh, \textit{Dorothea Beale of Cheltenham}, pp 304-305.
Dorothea's influence in certain circles was quite extensive. John Ruskin donated some rare manuscripts to the College library and Bishop B. F. Westcott demonstrated a very personal interest in Ramabai.36 Charles Gore and his sister, Miss Gore, Dean Church and his family, were also amongst Dorothea's circle of acquaintances who were interested in Ramabai.37

The CSMV very quickly publicized Ramabai's conversion both in England and in India. Reports of her baptism were released to the Indian papers and the CSMV lost little time in urging Ramabai to write her apologia to various people of influence.38 One such person was Sir Bartle Frere, a veteran of thirty years service with the Government of India, a former Governor of both Bombay and the Cape of Good Hope, and then currently on the committee of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society.39 Copies of a standard apologia were published by the Community and distributed for general interest amongst the external sisters and other interested parties.40 Photographs of Ramabai and Manoramabai were on sale at the Community House along with a biographical sketch of the Pandita. A cabinet size photograph sold for two shillings, a smaller

36 Clarke, op.cit., pp 205-206; Westcott to Beale, December 11, 1886, Beale Correspondence; Sister Geraldine, Letters and Correspondence pp 19-20.
37 Sister Geraldine, Letters and Correspondence pp 19-20. On Charles Gore, see Letters and Correspondence pp 82-84.
38 The Bombay Gazette reported extensively on Ramabai's conversion. See the Bombay Gazette, Oct 18, 1883, p 2; Oct 22, 1883, p 3; Oct 30, 1883, p 3; Oct 29, 1883, p 3.
40 November 1, 1883, Monthly Letters of the CSMV, Letters and Correspondence pp 15-18.
one for one shilling and sixpence. By such means the CSMV was able to use Ramabai’s conversion as a mark of its success in India. Public interest in her was therefore useful to the Community. It aroused interest in the work of the CSMV, which was likely to lead to financial and spiritual support for its ventures. Similarly the publicity alerted various people and organizations to Ramabai’s potential usefulness in India, thus preparing the ground for her future employment in the Church and the possible extension of Wantage influence.

However, not everyone was welcome in Geraldine’s eyes. She complained loudly of the "swarms of Non-Conformists who buzzed around her (Ramabai) like mosquitoes..." The situation was of great concern to Geraldine, who feared that Ramabai might leave the Community for a rival tradition and thereby damage the Community’s reputation. In the light of such a defection it might be said of the CSMV that it could not sustain its neophytes and therefore was unlikely to establish any lasting work in India. Such rumours could have damaged the credibility of the Poona Mission. Others might also conclude that in its zeal the Community had baptized Ramabai prematurely. And indeed it was a question Geraldine asked herself. Likewise a defection might provide fodder for critics of sisterhoods who were quick to allude to the harsh discipline of religious houses. Accordingly even when relationships were severely strained between Ramabai and the CSMV and the Pandita had left England for America, the Community continued to deny that any rift had ever occurred although in later years, Sister Geraldine was more forthcoming.

Throughout Ramabai’s period at Cheltenham 1884-1886, many people were anxious to guide and advise her, each purporting to have only her

41 Oct 1, 1883, Monthly Letters of the CSMV
42 Sister Geraldine, Letters and Correspondence, p 400.
43 Sister Geraldine to the Dean of Lincoln, July 1 1885, Letters and Correspondence, pp 71-72.
44 Sister Geraldine, Letters and Correspondence, p 410.
45 See Geraldine, Letters and Correspondence pp 21, 400.
interests at heart and equally certain that his/her advice was correct. Sister Geraldine and Dorothea Beale were amongst that number and as Ramabai came to rely more and more upon Dorothea's advice, Geraldine was anxious that her influence over Ramabai was waning. From the beginning Geraldine had been aware of such a possibility as she revealed in her letter to Dorothea of 18th December 1883. There she very carefully advised Dorothea that in committing Ramabai to her care, she was to remember that the Community of St Mary the Virgin was to be considered in loco parentis to Ramabai. Geraldine stipulated that any decision which affected Ramabai's future was to be referred to the Community. She also warned in her letter that, "...it would not be right to withhold from you the fact that plans for her future have been and are still being arranged for her by many who are most deeply interested in her and her cause, but to whom on this point she has not looked for advice; I know the responsibility you feel the care of her involves, and therefore I am sure you would wish to know also if there are any rocks to be steered clear of in guiding her.

Geraldine later singled out Mrs Gilmore of the Zenana Bible and Medical Mission and a group of unidentified Nonconformists as being amongst the many who in seeking to convert Ramabai to their own traditions were undermining her faith in the CSMV. A further group was identified by Geraldine as Brahmins, who maintained regular correspondence with Ramabai. While Dorothea did not regard Mrs Gilmore in quite the same light as Geraldine, she admitted that Ramabai appeared unsettled after seeing her. Alternatively,

46 Ibid, p 400.
47 Sister Geraldine to the Dean of Lincoln, July 1 1885, Letters and Correspondence pp 71-72.
48 Geraldine to Dorothea Beale, 18th December 1883, Letters and Correspondence pp 21-22.
49 Geraldine to Dorothea Beale, 18th December 1883, Letters and Correspondence pp 21-22.
50 Geraldine to Dorothea, 18th December, 1883, Letters and Correspondence, pp 21-22.
51 Sister Geraldine, Letters and Correspondence, pp 4, 19-20, 400, 406.
52 Ibid, pp 400, 406; Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, "St Hilda's Sunday", Letters and Correspondence p 153.
Dorothea was aware of another group of women, whom she described as being "in the Unitarian interest" who were anxious to have Ramabai stay with them in London.54

In preparing for her English education Ramabai had to develop a critical approach to information in order to decide between competing truth claims within Christianity. At the same time she was constantly having to justify her new religious beliefs to her Indian correspondents.55 As 1884 unfolded, she was faced with the difficult task of deciding whose advice amongst her many friends and correspondents she would accept. Similarly at Cheltenham she was daily confronted with the task of evaluating various types of information which drew meaning from a cultural background alien to her own. It was an educational system vastly different from her own experience in India, where she had learned by rote hundreds of verses from the Bhagavata Purana. The cultural differences within the educational systems had already proved to be an obstacle in her preparation for baptism, in which as she later admitted she had simply repeated what she had been instructed to learn, not what she necessarily believed. Adding to these pressures were episcopal concerns that Ramabai's education at Cheltenham would result in her westernization, thereby reducing her value to the Church.56

The Disclosure of June 1884

In June of 1884 Ramabai confided to Canon Butler her desire to found a religious house in India. It was a desire, she confessed, which emerged shortly after her baptism.57 It was highly probable that Geraldine already knew of this

53 Dorothea to Canon Butler, July 1885, Letters and Correspondence pp 77-79
54 Dorothea Beale to the Bishop of Bombay, May 22, 1884, Letters and Correspondence p 40.
55 Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, "St Hilda's Sunday" Letters and Correspondence p 153.
56 Bishop T. V. French to Dorothea Beale, May 25, 1884, Letters and Correspondence p 42.
some months earlier when she wrote to Dorothea stating that Ramabai desired to live "a hidden life". But the disclosure created an unexpected difficulty for Ramabai. It altered the nature of her relationship with both Canon Butler and Geraldine in that their expectations of her undoubtedly increased. They believed they were no longer dealing only with a young convert exploring one of many future possibilities but with a possible foundress of a religious house in India. Butler expressed this in his letter to Dorothea of the 17th June. He wrote,

"Now what will you think of this? Mary Ramabai told me yesterday that her heart was set on becoming a Sister and endeavouring to found in India a "Religious House" on Indian lines. The thought came first to her at her Baptism, and has pressed on her so strongly that she could not refrain from uttering it. I told her that we would keep her in England till she was at least thirty. She is now twenty-six. I should wish her still to go to Cheltenham and if she continues in the same mind, return to Wantage for her Novitiate. What do you think? Would it be better or not for her to become a Postulant at once, and may go to Cheltenham? This would involve no outward manifestation. It would only be an inward bond?"

Whether or not Ramabai made such an "inward bond" before she went to Cheltenham is not known, but in the eyes of both Geraldine and Canon Butler she had indicated the direction of her life. Geraldine's role as spiritual director appeared to be bearing fruit. It is therefore understandable in the light of this disclosure why Ramabai's eventual statement that in spite of her public affirmation of faith at her baptism and confirmation, she had never believed in the divinity of Christ, appeared to the CSMV to be an act of betrayal. It was only Geraldine's recollection that there was or rather appeared to be a period of faith during those months prior to and shortly after Ramabai's commencement at Cheltenham, which enabled her to contradict Ramabai's stark confession.

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57 Butler to Beale, June 17, 1894, Letters and Correspondence, pp. 45-46.
58 Geraldine to Dorothea Beale, 18th December 1889, Letters and Correspondence, p. 22; Dorothea to Sister Geraldine, August 1884, Letters and Correspondence, p. 26.
59 Butler to Beale, June 17, 1894, Letters and Correspondence, p. 46.
60 Ramabai to Geraldine, September 22, 1885; Geraldine to Ramabai, October 5, 1885, Letters and Correspondence, pp. 89-90, 91-92.
61 Geraldine to Ramabai, Oct 5, 1885, Letters and Correspondence, pp. 91-92.
Chapter 7: The Sanskrit Debate

Introduction

1885 was a turbulent year for Ramabai. She came into direct conflict with the CSMV over issues relating to her appointment as Professor of Sanskrit at The Cheltenham Ladies' College. The Sanskrit Debate had commenced in 1884 but in the following year the correspondence developed a bitterness which had been lacking in its initial phase. The Trinitarian controversy also commenced in 1885 and with it the first signs of Ramabai's growing opposition to certain key tenets of Anglicanism. These two issues dominated 1885 and led directly to Ramabai's break with the CSMV. Emotional issues also clouded these events. Ramabai's move to The Cheltenham Ladies' College in 1884 created an opportunity for her to demonstrate her independence from the CSMV, crucial to which was her relationship with Dorothea Beale. Whilst Dorothea did not support Ramabai's ideological opposition to Anglican doctrine she did treat her problems sympathetically, thereby becoming a buffer between Ramabai and the CSMV.

Ramabai's growing resentment towards the CSMV throughout 1885 was further exacerbated by the presence of Mrs Poole, the housekeeper, who furnished Geraldine with reports on Ramabai's religious life.¹ The relationship between Ramabai and the CSMV throughout the year was further strained with Ramabai's intellectual difficulties with Anglicanism providing fodder for her struggle for independence. Fuelling Ramabai's opposition to Anglican doctrine and authority were her correspondents and contacts in England and India. Ramabai's disregard of Sister Geraldine's request to terminate all correspondence with people opposed to high Anglicanism angered the CSMV and resulted in her being

¹ Mrs Poole to Sister Geraldine, June 1885, Sister Geraldine to Canon Butler, July 1, 1885, Letters and Correspondence pp 63–64, 71–72.
torn between differing points of view. Another issue which aided and abetted the deterioration of Ramabai's relationship with the CSMV were the differences between herself and Geraldine regarding the religious education of Manoramabai.

The Sanskrit Debate, which lasted from May 1884 to June 1885, centred on issues relating to Ramabai's appointment as Professor of Sanskrit at The Cheltenham Ladies' College. During 1884, the controversy essentially flourished among Dorothea Beale, the Bishops of Bombay and Lahore, Sister Geraldine and Canon Butler over the appropriateness of appointing an Indian to such a position. British racial generalizations regarding Hindu character traits, specifically vanity, were at issue, as well as genuine concern that if Ramabai stayed for any length of time in England she would become anglicized.

The situation as it developed throughout 1885 was fraught with racial generalizations and gender discrimination: issues which, as will be shown, Ramabai identified and to which she reacted. As the debate developed it revealed her growing resentment of British attitudes of racial superiority and paternalism. In Canada she was outspoken regarding British suzerainty over India and particularly critical of its failure to provide justice for Indian women citing the Rukhmabai case as a specific example. The controversies of 1885 left

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3 Ramabai believed the CSMV was indoctrinating Mano into Trinitarianism. She vehemently objected to her daughter addressing any prayer to Jesus or learning any parts of the Prayer Book which reflected belief in the Trinity and in the divinity of Christ. See the following correspondence: Ramabai to Geraldine, September 20, 1885; Ramabai to Dorothea, September 21, 1885, *Letters and Correspondence*, pp 65-67, 140.

4 Myline to Beale, May 21, 1884, May 26, 1884; French to Beale, May 25, 1884; Canon Butler to Beale July 5, 1885, *Letters and Correspondence* pp 39, 43-44, 76.

5 Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, May 22, 1887, *Letters and Correspondence* pp 175-178; Ramabai's speech of May 12, 1888 in Canada at the Queen's Hall,
Ramabai with a distaste for British authoritarianism. After her break with the English Church she preferred to have cordial but distant relations with British officialdom. Such was her fear of losing her independence in any involvement with governmental authorities that she refused to seek financial assistance from the Government of India when she commenced the Sharada Sadan. 6 And for many years she was wary of complying with governmental regulations concerning her institutions, again for fear of losing her independence. 7 The issues raised in the debates of 1885, therefore, had far reaching consequences for Ramabai's relationship with the Church of England as well as with the Government of India.

1884: The Sanskrit Debate Part One.

In early 1884, Ramabai took up residence in Cheltenham with Mrs Poole as her housekeeper. 8 In an effort to overcome her financial dependence upon the CSMV Ramabai indicated to Dorothea Beale her desire for part time employment. 9 Dorothea responded with an invitation to appoint her Professor of Sanskrit at The Cheltenham Ladies' College. 10 The appointment took effect from June of 1884. 11 Presumably in order to introduce Ramabai as a member of the College staff, Dorothea suggested a series of public lectures. As a result, the proposed lectures were advertised in early May and invitations sent to all interested parties including Louis George Mylne, Bishop of Bombay. 12

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7 Ramabai, "New Proposals for the Education of High-Caste Hindu Widows", Boston Monday Lectures p 259; Sister Geraldine, Letters and Correspondence p 367, 379
9 Beale to Bishop Mylne, May 22nd 1884, Letters and Correspondence p 40.
10 May 22nd May 1884, Letters and Correspondence p 40
11 The Cheltenham Ladies' College Minute Book (1872-1888), The Cheltenham Ladies' College Archives. For further references to the appointment see, Ramabai, The Widows' Friend, p 19; Bishop French to Dorothea Beale, May 25, 1884, Letters and Correspondence p 43.
Ramabai's appointment was opposed by three Indian bishops: Mylne of Bombay, French of Lahore and Caldwell of Tinnevelly, who feared that it would foster in her certain weaknesses in the Indian character, notably pride and vanity, which would render her unfit for mission work. 13 They also argued she would be anglicized, which would make her less valuable as an evangelist for the Church of England in India.14 Mylne believed that ultimately the evangelization of India lay with the quality of Christian converts such as Ramabai but that essential to their success was the retention of their cultural identity if they were to be acceptable to their own compatriots.15 But whilst his use of the term "denationalization" was not intended to imply that Indians had a "national identity", particularly in light of the absence of national political and cultural cohesiveness, he did believe that they had an Asiatic identity which needed to be preserved if converts were to be successful evangelists. 16 Unfortunately in light of his contempt for Hindu culture, he was not very clear in his own mind what that identity entailed as much as what it did not. 17 And certainly it did not entail the acceptance by an Indian woman of a position on the staff of a

12 Mylne to Beale, May 21, 1884, Letters and Correspondence pp 38-39.
13 Mylne to Beale, 21st May, 26th May 1884; French to Beale, May 25 184, Letters and Correspondence pp 38-39, 42-44. All the bishops had extensive experience in India, particularly Caldwell and French. On the length of their episcopalates see the following entries in Crockford's Clerical Directory. Thomas Valpy French, Bishop of Lahore, 1877-1897; Robert Caldwell Assistant Bishop in the Diocese of Madras 1877-1891. Louis George Mylne, Bishop of Bombay 1876-1898 Crockford's Clerical Directory, 1891, 1920. Caldwell particularly had extensive experience in India, originally with the L.M.S. See Stock, The History of the Church Missionary Society, Vol 3, pp 162, 168, 172.
14 Mylne to Beale, 21st May 1884 and 26th May 1884; French to Beale, May 25, 1884, Letters and Correspondence pp 38-39,42-44. Caldwell's opinion was sought according to Mylne's letter to Dorothea of 26th May 1884 and his objection noted in a subsequent letter to Beale of 5th June 1885. See Letters and Correspondence pp 44 56.
15 Mylne, Missions to Hindus p 157.
17 Ibid, see particularly pages 27ff.
leading girls' school.

Almost a generation before, the Bible Women’s Movement had been successful amongst the poor of London by employing poor women to evangelize members of their own class.\textsuperscript{18} The trend had continued and missions in India were well aware of the importance of utilizing people in evangelistic work who were content with their status.\textsuperscript{19} Not only were they "useful" in reaching others on the same social level but in the case of indigenous converts they were more effective in communication and most importantly they were more amenable to direction.\textsuperscript{20} The suspicion arises that Mylne believed that in accepting a position on the staff of The Cheltenham Ladies’ College Ramabai was not only in danger of being anglicized but she was aspiring beyond her station in life. The bishops made frequent references to the appointment as one which would feed her vanity and increase her sense of self importance.\textsuperscript{21} This in itself confirmed that the position had status. In fact French believed that a lesser position should have been offered to Ramabai or the current one decreased in status to avoid any encouragement of an attitude of self importance.\textsuperscript{22} Objections such as these suggest that at least part of the episcopal disapproval of the appointment was motivated by racial attitudes of British superiority. Mylne in particular was very paternalistic towards his converts.\textsuperscript{23} He firmly believed that Hinduism had so vigorously sapped the moral fibre of India for generations that it would require years of education in Christian principles before the majority of converts developed a moral conscience, strength of character or a sense of responsibility.\textsuperscript{24} He therefore believed that even the very best converts

\textsuperscript{18} Heene, \textit{The Women’s Movement in the Church of England} pp 48-49.
\textsuperscript{19} Richter, \textit{A History of Missions in India} pp 418,421.
\textsuperscript{20} Mylne to Beale, May 21, 1884, \textit{Letters and Correspondence} pp 38-39; Richter, op.cit., pp 418,421; Mylne, op.cit., pp 156-157.
\textsuperscript{21} Mylne to Beale, May 21, 1884;French to Beale, May 25, 1884, \textit{Letters and Correspondence} pp 38-39,42-43.
\textsuperscript{22} French to Beale, May 25, 1884, \textit{Letters and Correspondence} p 43.
\textsuperscript{23} Mylne, op.cit., pp 171-173.
required careful nurturing and guidance to avoid situations in which their weaknesses might be exploited. With one or two exceptions, notably Nehemiah Goreh, Mylne did not have a high opinion of the moral character of Indian converts.25 Nor did he believe that, with very few exceptions, true Christian character could be realistically expected of first generation converts.26 Mylne’s argument that Ramabai’s appointment to Cheltenham would encourage her natural tendency towards vanity and pride must therefore be assessed in light of his racial attitudes, as must his concern for her cultural integrity.27 In addition, Mylne’s prejudice must be distinguished from particular incidents involving Ramabai when occasionally she seemed to confirm his opinions. That aside, the presence of racial bias in the episcopal opposition to Ramabai’s appointment appears inescapable. It was not only apparent in the bishops’ espousal of racially defining characteristics but in their fears for Ramabai’s possible denationalization which appeared to include the harbouring of premature and possibly unlawful aspirations.28

Mylne’s belief in racially defining characteristics was based upon his observation of the role of Hinduism in shaping the moral character and world view of its adherents.29 He concluded that Hinduism had produced a morally degenerate race of people, whose moral conduct was vastly inferior to that of English men and women.30 But having condemned Hinduism, proclaimed the moral superiority of Christianity, the incorruptibility of the British Raj and assumed the intellectual superiority of Western education and culture, it is ironic that he demonstrated very little awareness of the possibility that British culture and Christianity might be synonymous in the eyes of many converts. Certainly he was

26 Ibid, pp 165-166.
27 Ibid, pp 165-166.
28 French to Beale, May 26, 1884, Letters and Correspondence, p 43.
29 Mylne, op.cit., pp 44-46, 57-70.
not unaware that conversion dislodged converts from their cultural roots. In Mylne's account of the Hindu gentleman at Cambridge, whom he dismissed as unsuitable for mission work, he argued that the gentleman's vanity and westernization had rendered him useless. In short Mylne looked for evidence of attitudinal change in his assessment of the effects of denationalization on converts. The question is, did he regard subservience as an integral component of Indian cultural integrity?

The racial attitudes displayed by the bishops were neither uncommon nor peculiar to British missionaries. In fact French and Mylne were by no means extremists in their views. Jon Bonk's article, "All Things to to All Persons" - The Missionary as a Racist-Imperialist 1860-1918 clearly establishes that such attitudes were widespread amongst western nations and enjoyed a certain credibility owing to scientific studies which purported to be able to classify races as either inferior or superior on the basis of physical, intellectual and moral characteristics. The imposition of English cultural and religious values as the standard of measurement and comparison of a foreign culture, particularly one under political subordination and as diverse as India, could only result in the latter's disadvantage. A further source of British racial prejudice against Indians and one which may also have given such attitudes authority and respectability was James Mill's History of British India, a standard text for English civil servants for several decades and one which was highly condemnatory of Indian society. Mention has already been made of the

32 Mylne, 21st May 1884, Letters and Correspondence, p 39. See also Julius Richter, A History of Missions in India, p 418.
34 See Mylne's Missions to Hindus pp 27ff.
bishops' belief that Indians were by nature vain and particularly susceptible to flattery; Mylne also believed them to be a race of notorious liars. 36

Mylne's objections to Ramabai accepting a position on the staff of Cheltenham and to Dorothea Beale's advertisement promoting a series of lectures by Ramabai were based upon such prejudices. He advised Dorothea that Ramabai was in danger of being "completely spoilt" by all the publicity she was receiving. 37 French was likewise concerned that a professorship amongst English young ladies might lead to "a little undue self-exaltation". 38 He was concerned that too much education and attention were detrimental to the attitudes of Indian converts and therefore to their suitability in mission situations. He wrote,

"But as a rule I have protested against young Christian Hindoos being sent over to England, as they have almost uniformly scorned work among their own countrymen, and become wholly denationalised." 39

Nor were the bishops alone in their concern that Ramabai's new status might feed her vanity. Canon Butler confided to Dorothea Beale the opinion of Sir George Hunter, director of Indian medical work. Butler wrote,

"He (Hunter) quite approved of her (Ramabai) going to Cheltenham, but entirely agreed with what we have already been told, that we must be most careful not to advertise her, or to make much of her in "public". No native, he told me, that he had ever met with, could bear this without evil ensuing. He says that vanity is one of their very faults." 40

Sister Geraldine likewise alluded to Ramabai's vanity on many
occasions and to the reputation Indians had for deceit. Max Millar was likewise aware of such racial generalisations but distanced himself from such views. Whilst it was clear that Ramabai did not lack confidence in her own opinions, much of the charges concerning her vanity stemmed from pre-conceived notions of Hindu character traits. She was accused by Geraldine of vanity because she objected to the use of lard in cookery but also because she dared to question Anglican authority. When the relationship between Butler and Ramabai deteriorated in 1885, Butler retaliated by accusing Ramabai of arrogance which he directly attributed to the result of too much attention.

It is clear that Myline and French’s concerns about Ramabai’s possible denationalization were coloured by racial attitudes. The failure of British missions in India to create indigenous independent churches in the 19th century was largely attributed by Bishop V. S. Azariah to the poor relationship between Indian converts and foreign missionaries. At Edinburgh in 1910 he described the situation as “one of the most serious problems confronting the Church today.” He directly attributed the problem to western racial attitudes towards Indians. In particular he claimed, attitudes of “patronage” and “condescension” towards Indian converts by foreign missionaries were not only widespread but detrimental to the growth of the indigenous church. Myline and French typified such attitudes in their concerns for Ramabai’s well being. She, like other Indian converts, attracted criticism when she appeared to harbour aspirations above

41 Sister Geraldine to Dorothea Beale, Jan 1886, Letters and Correspondence, p 115; Sister Geraldine, Letters and Correspondence, pp 404,407. See also Sen, “Jesus Christ: Europe and Asia” Lectures in India pp 17-20.
42 See Max Millar’s, “My Indian Friends”, pp 149-152.
44 Butler to Beale, July 5 1886, Letters and Correspondence p 76.
her race and station or when she rejected the Church's guidance and advice.46

Ramabai's reputation had drawn significant audiences to her lectures in India and the Church of England hoped to capitalize on her assets to draw others into its community.47 It did not occur to the bishops that there was any contradiction between their concerns to protect Ramabai from publicity, and her reputation which had grown as a result of it, and which made her such an attractive convert. But whilst the bishops were unable to examine their own racial attitudes and their impact upon episcopal policy, there is no reason to doubt the genuineness of their motives in seeking to neutralize any development which might have impeded their vision of Ramabai's future work in India. Essentially they believed that she could avoid the danger of denationalization by returning to India as soon as possible. 48 They were not unaware of a growing nationalist movement and the criticisms which it had levelled at Indians who adopted British manners or who appeared to lose respect for traditional customs.49 Ramabai herself had been critical of Goreh on this point. His preference for a Latin inscription instead of a Sanskrit one on a proposed crucifix for Ramabai's Indian sisterhood had astounded her.50 She described him

46 Richter, op.cit., p 421; Myine to Sister Geraldine, 5th June 1886; Sister Geraldine to the Bishop of Oxford, (undated), Letters and Correspondence pp 57-58, 29-30
47 French regarded Ramabai as an asset and he hoped she would establish a Hindu training college for widows at Simla or Delhi. French to Beale, May 25, 1884, Letters and Correspondence p 43.
48 Myine to Beale 21st May 1884; French to Beale May 25, 1884, Letters and Correspondence pp 39, 42.
as one who "does not or will not sympathise with Indian feelings...." She too was aware of the danger of denationalization and her adherence to caste customs and her wearing of the sari were obvious means of preserving her cultural identity but she readily admitted that denationalization could prove a potential danger for her daughter who had few memories of India. Consequently Ramabai's rejection of the CSMV's request to educate Mano in England was partly influenced by this concern.

During this period, Ramabai was very enthusiastic about the writings of Keshub Chunder Sen and he may well have had an influence on her attitudes towards westernization. Keshub was very concerned about this issue and he lampooned Indians who surrendered their self esteem to the British. He addressed his criticisms not only to Brahmans but to converts to Christianity. Declaring that Christ was Asiatic not European he argued that India had a cultural advantage over Europe in interpreting the teachings of Christ, as it did in understanding the divine personality. Therefore, he argued, Asiatics ought to preserve and cultivate their own religious heritage rather than surrender it to a supposedly superior culture whose interpretation of its own religion was often in error. Furthermore, Keshub lived in expectation of a divine blessing to India which would see it become a source of spiritual knowledge and inspiration to the world. If Ramabai followed Keshub's argument and her enthusiasm for his writings suggested she did, then she had little or no incentive to adopt

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50 Ramabai to Sister Geraldine, October 1884, Letters and Correspondence, p 28
51 Ramabai to Sister Geraldine, October 1884, Letters and Correspondence, pp 27-29. For an alternative view of Goreh, see Robin Boyd, op.cit., pp 54-55.
52 Ramabai to Sister Geraldine, May 20, 1887; Sister Eleanor to Sister Geraldine 19th August 1889, Letters and Correspondence, p 199, 240.
54 Sen, Lectures in India pp 25-27.
57 Ibid, pp 202ff.
British attitudes, manners or lifestyle, and every reason to believe that the preservation of her own culture would prove to be an advantage in understanding and transmitting the teachings of Christ.\textsuperscript{58} Indeed Keshub argued that only an indigenous Christianity would succeed in India.\textsuperscript{59} On the other hand, the bishops believed that converts such as Ramabai, would be only too tempted to adopt the manners and aspirations of a superior society. Therefore, whilst they looked for physical evidence of denationalization, such as western dress and English manners; they were equally concerned with evidence of attitudinal change, for example, vanity and ambition.\textsuperscript{60}

\textsuperscript{58} Ibid, pp 355-356,373-377.
\textsuperscript{59} Ibid, pp 122-124, 205-207.
\textsuperscript{60} Myine, \textit{Mission to the Hindus}, p 154.
Ramabai’s conversion was considered a triumph for the Anglican Church. Her reputation for scholarship and the esteem in which she was held by the Brahmo Samaj movement made her a very attractive convert. Most importantly the conversion of a Brahmin, even one who had already lost caste, demonstrated once again that Christianity was not a religion only for the depressed classes.\(^1\) As missionaries with considerable experience the bishops were well aware of the social dynamics of caste and the alienation that converts experienced in losing their status in Indian society.\(^2\) But whilst it was the intention of British missions to establish indigenous churches, conversion to Christianity, particularly if it involved the rigorous rejection of caste and its traditions, displaced Indians from their cultural roots, encouraging many to identify closely with Western culture.\(^3\) Mylne was not unaware of the effect of cultural loss upon converts but he did not approve of the adoption of British culture as a form of compensation.\(^4\) For this reason he and French were anxious to minimize Ramabai’s exposure to it.

Mylne demonstrated some of the confusion which resulted from a blanket opposition to caste without due consideration for the culture which underpinned it. This was evident by his concern for Ramabai’s cultural integrity whilst at the same time condemning her cultural heritage.\(^5\) But whilst Mylne

\(^1\) Duncan B. Forrester, *Caste and Christianity* p 15.
\(^2\) On the loss of caste of Christian converts, see for example, Richter, op.cit., pp 256-257
\(^5\) Mylne, op.cit., pp 53 ff
warned against denationalization, arguing that converts ought to preserve their "Asiatic" identity, he appeared to have little inkling of what, except prejudicially, that identity might be. \(^{66}\) His antipathy towards Hindu culture precluded him from discerning within it any redeeming qualities. As a result, his notion of an "Asiatic" identity was devoid of any historical or cultural basis and it is difficult to imagine that any convert would have been consoled by it.

In contrast to Mylne's negativity, Keshub Chunder Sen's use of the term, "Asiatic" was far more positive. He appealed to India's religious heritage as an Asiatic spirituality with insights and skills rivalling and complementing the traditions of Europe. \(^{67}\) It was a term he used synonymously with "Indian", to suggest, in the absence of national cohesiveness, a civilisation, which was culturally diverse, but distinctive. \(^{68}\) It was an inclusive term and in a land of communal tensions that was a necessary consideration. Most importantly, Keshub used the term "Asiatic" in a way which bolstered the self esteem of his community and his country. Not only did he place "Asia" on a equal footing with "Europe," but he challenged the assumed spiritual superiority of the latter, by identifying Jesus Christ as an Asiatic. \(^{69}\) Therefore whilst the term for Mylne was largely negative but useful in distinguishing converts from Hindus, Keshub used it to conjure positive and romantic images of India's spiritual heritage and mystical powers. \(^{70}\)

As with many Hindus who had been exposed to Christianity and to western education, Keshub recognized the tensions it created with his own culture. As we previously noted, he attempted to reconcile these tensions in himself through a cultural and intellectual synthesis between eastern and western knowledge and spirituality without becoming westernized, that is, without

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surrendering all his cultural values and traditions and therefore pride in his distinctiveness. When we consider Ramabai's eclecticism and the frequent criticisms levelled at her vanity it is not hard to discover the source of the influence. Westernization with the implications it conveyed of loss of culture and identity, was also viewed as a significant danger by many Indian converts, and some such as the Brahmins of St Marys Tope, and the Catholic convert, Brahmabandhab Upadhyaya, successfully attempted to forge new Indian/Christian identities for themselves, not always however with the support of their Christian mentors. 71 But by and large there appeared to be few options for converts and undoubtedly many privately chose to maintain many ancestral customs and beliefs, including caste traditions, which were not sanctioned by missions. 72

The caste controversies of the 1860s had resulted in the majority of Protestant missions adopting an aggressive policy of opposition towards caste, making it clear to converts that any compromise with it would not be tolerated. 73 In opposition to the majority view were the Leipzig Lutherans who considered caste to be fundamental to the social and cultural foundation of Hindu society. 74 But as converts often proved, caste roots were deep, conveying status to those without and obligation to those within. 75 Caste has been described as the "functioning unit" of the Hindu social system and whilst converts lost their status in the eyes of those outside the Christian compound, caste often remained a formidable dynamic in relationships amongst the converted as missionary bodies

71 G. A. Oddie, "Brahmans and Christian Conversion" in Hindu and Christian in South East India p 150
72 Forrester, op.cit., pp 84, 88-89.
74 Eric J Sharpe, "Patience with the Weak", Indo British Review, Vol 19, No 1, p 123, 125.
well knew. Even with the successful expulsion of its "evils", it retained its potency and under certain circumstances it could prove a significant factor in evangelisation, Goreh's evangelization of Ramabai being a case in point. In an interview with the Chicago Inter-Ocean, Ramabai discussed her loss of caste but added in reference to her proposed work amongst the high-caste,

"Although I LOST MY CASTE by embracing Christianity and marrying out of my caste, I know their manners and customs and have influence with the men and can work in the families."  

Caste, therefore, proved to be influential even when it had been nullified. Ramabai and Goreh were bound by caste to a common religious culture reinforced by ties of loyalty and obligation. For example, Ramabai refused to disassociate herself from caste customs which could be classed as things "indifferent" such as her adherence to vegetarianism and her refusal of alcohol. She also continued to employ a Brahmin cook in both her educational institutions in spite of the fact that Mukti was from the beginning a Christian community. Therefore, given the tenacity of caste in Indian society and Ramabai's own demonstration of caste consciousness, the fact that she and Goreh were both Chitpavan Brahmans must be considered a primary factor in the dynamics of their relationship.

The search for a higher social status, indeed even an ambition to realize the egalitarian ideal has been identified as a motive for conversion amongst the Harijan and low caste groups but it was hardly a motive for

77 "Hindu-Child Widows",Inter-Ocean, Chicago July 26, 1887, original emphasis.  
78 Ramabai to Geraldine, October 1884, Letters and Correspondence p 27. Ramabai received wine at the eucharist but later came to reject it in favour of grape juice. See Ramabai's letter to Sister Geraldine, August 27 1887, Letters and Correspondence pp 201-203;"Hindu-Child Widows: An Effort being made to Teach them to Read and Write" Inter-Ocean Chicago, July 26, 1887.  
Brahmin conversion. However, it could be said of Indian women that they constitute a parallel caste structure. For although a Brahmin woman enjoyed a high-caste status through her relationship with the male head of her family, her religious status was only equivalent to a Shudra allowing her little hope of achieving liberation. In their concerns over Ramabai’s possible denationalization the bishops displayed little awareness of equality as a religious and social ideal amongst her motives for conversion. This was evident from their opinion that Ramabai’s usefulness to the Church was dependent upon her being largely unaffected by her experiences in England. Specifically they were wary of her displaying any tendency to identify with English women, particularly by aspiring to an appointment as Professor of Sanskrit. But in the light of missionary literature which extolled the superior status of women within Christianity and condemned the inferior status of Hindu women as immoral, what else could have been expected?

Dorothea Beale refused to cancel Ramabai’s appointment as Professor of Sanskrit. She warned Bishop Mylne that there were parties other than the Church of England vying for Ramabai’s attention and referred obliquely to “Unitarians.” Furthermore she assured the bishop that Ramabai’s time at Cheltenham Ladies’ College would prove to be very productive and that in addition to her other duties she would be engaged in writing for various Indian newspapers on matters of interest to Indian women. Dorothea was also of the opinion that the CSMV had supported Ramabai’s appointment as well as the

80 Forrester identified the desire for egalitarianism as a frequent motive in Christian conversion. He also noted the inability of Protestant missionaries to critically examine their own attitudes towards class and race. See Caste and Christianity pp 119, 129-130.
82 See for example, “The Condition of Women in India and the Work of the Society” in India’s Women, October 1880, prefatory no, pp 3ff.
83 Beale to Mylne, May 22nd 1884, Letters and Correspondence p 40.
84 Beale to Mylne, May 22nd 1884, Letters and Correspondence p 40.
advertisements promoting her lectures. But whilst the appointment was subsequently not questioned by the CSMV, it advised Dorothea against further advertisements in the wake of episcopal disapproval.

Dorothea opened up a second front with Bishop Mylne in her efforts to secure episcopal approval for Ramabai's appointment. She referred to Miss Riddell of the S.P.G. and to her complaint that women missionaries were largely ignorant of the cultures in which they worked. Dorothea suggested to Bishop Mylne that Ramabai might prove useful in acquainting the college students, some of whom might go to India, with a knowledge of Sanskrit and its culture. She also suggested that students from the Working Men's College who were planning to go to India might appreciate lessons, adding that many of her own staff regularly gave lessons there.

Dorothea's reference to the possibility of Ramabai instructing men brought an urgent reply from Bishop Mylne. Knowing he had the support of his brother bishops and believing that he "knew" India, Mylne informed Dorothea that he hoped she and Ramabai would be guided by the "highest authorities" in the Church on Indian matters. These authorities he named as the Bishop of Lahore and Bishop Caldwell. Mylne, supported by Lahore, was of the opinion that Ramabai should return to India as soon as the uproar over her conversion had passed.

Dorothea's reference to the possibility of Ramabai instructing males

85 Beale to Mylne, May 22, 1884, Letters and Correspondence p 41.
86 Butler to Beale, June 15, 1884; Sister Geraldine to Beale, May 6, 1885; Geraldine to Ramabai, May 10, 1885, Letters and Correspondence pp 45, 47, 51.
87 Dorothea Beale to Bishop Mylne, May 22, 1884, Letters and Correspondence p 41.
88 Dorothea Beale to Bishop Mylne, May 22 1884, Letters and Correspondence p 41.
89 Dorothea Beale to Bishop Mylne, May 22 1884, Letters and Correspondence p 41.
90 Mylne to Dorothea Beale, May 26, 1884, pp Letters and Correspondence pp 43-44.
91 Mylne to Dorothea Beale, May 26, 1884, Letters and Correspondence p 44.
92 Mylne to Dorothea Beale, May 26, 1884, Letters and Correspondence p 44.
gave him great concern. Mylne assured Dorothea that the CSMV had been briefly informed.93 Dorothea’s prior appeal to the support of the Wantage Sisters had been episcopally noted and Mylne moved quickly to remove that support by requesting that she send his letters to Wantage.94

In Mylne’s opinion denationalization was deemed to be a potential threat in the case of an Indian woman if she exhibited behaviour contrary to the expectations of her social group. He made it very clear that whilst it might be commonplace for Miss Beale’s staff to lecture at the Working Men’s College it was unacceptable for an Indian woman to do so.95 In fact he believed that if Ramabai forgot her status both as a woman and as an Indian her usefulness to the Church as far as he was concerned was at an end. In his letter of May 26th 1884, the issue of gender subordination was linked to mission and consequently to Ramabai’s future in the Church. Mylne wrote,

"Above all things pray believe that her influence will be ruined forever in India if she is known to have taught young men. Suffice it to say that it would cause scandal even among the better sort of native men, and that nothing would ever undo the harm it would do her among native women."96

Having been advised by an episcopal letter Canon Butler officially entered the fray on June 15, 1884. He advised Dorothea Beale not to publicize Ramabai’s lectures or draw too much public attention to her in case it encouraged in her a sense of self importance.97 However he appeared to differ with the bishops in the matter of Ramabai’s English education. Butler’s willingness to set aside episcopal advice can only be understood in the light of Ramabai’s disclosure to him of her ambition to enter the Community. In his letter to Dorothea Beale, following Ramabai’s confidence, Butler expressed the opinion

93 Mylne to Dorothea Beale, May 26, 1884, Letters and Correspondence p 44.
94 Mylne to Beale, May 26 1884, Letters and Correspondence p 44.
95 Mylne to Beale, May 26, 1884, Letters and Correspondence p 44.
96 Mylne to Dorothea Beale, May 26, 1884, Letters and Correspondence p 44
97 Butler to Dorothea Beale, June 15, 1884, Letters and Correspondence pp 45-46.
that he believed Ramabai should reside in England until she was thirty at which time she would take her final vows.98

Butler's letter to Dorothea of the 17th June referred again to his conversation with Sir George Hunter who, he said, believed that Ramabai's conversion had so destroyed her credibility with Indian society that an education at Cheltenham could do no further harm. Butler wrote:

"He (Hunter) knew all about Mary Ramabai, and he warned me that her influence as a fellow countrywoman with the Indian natives is utterly at an end. She will have no more access than an English woman. Therefore, said he, bring her up as much as may be, in English thought and ways and let her go out as a part of the staff of some English institution."99

Butler concluded his letter by advising Dorothea of the unsuitability of allowing Ramabai to tutor men. However the episcopal letter had unsettled Sister Geraldine and for a while she had doubts concerning Ramabai's proposed English education and whether it might jeopardize her future usefulness in India. Likewise she wondered whether the experience might encourage Ramabai's vanity.100 Ramabai's response to Geraldine's reservations was a tempered one. The heart of her letter was a gentle rebuke to Geraldine, Dorothea and the bishops for making decisions about her future without consultation with her. She wrote,

"I have received a letter from Miss Beale which I send to you. I am always surprised when I see or hear people, troubling themselves to decide my future, when My Lord is All Powerful and knows best to do with me whatever he likes."101

Geraldine confided to Dorothea Beale her concern that too much attention might prove detrimental to Ramabai's attempt to lead the "hidden

98 Butler to Beale, June 17, 1884, Letters and Correspondence pp 45-46.
99 Canon Butler to Dorothea Beale, June 15, 1884, Letters and Correspondence p 45
100 Ramabai to Sister Geraldine, July 1884, Letters and Correspondence pp 24-25
101 Ramabai to Sister Geraldine, July 1884, Letters and Correspondence pp 24-25.
life" and consequently upon her religious formation. As Ramabai's spiritual
director it was her responsibility to check any untoward developments moral and
spiritual. There were also the first hints from her that Dorothea might be
exerting too great an influence on Ramabai. Replying to Geraldine's letter,
Dorothea wrote,

"I shall be very sorry if anything is done that would be disapproved of
by those who have stood in loco parentis to Ramabai, or be in any way disloyal to
the Community or divert her thoughts from what hopes will be the main thought
of her life (as it seemed to me to be), helping her countrywomen to lead a higher
life, and preparing them to receive the truth..."

"I should be sorry in any way to interfere with her desire to lead the
"hidden life". 102

102 Dorothea Beale to Sister Geraldine, August 1884, Letters and
Correspondence p 26.
The Sanskrit Debate Part Two

The Context

The context of the second part of the Sanskrit Debate was the increasing dissatisfaction of Ramabai with CSMV teaching and culture. Between the latter months of 1884 and mid 1885 she admitted her dislike for religious formality and the difficulties she had in adjusting to the liturgical tradition of the high church. She confessed to Dorothea Beale her doubts concerning many of the supernatural assumptions of Christianity, at the same time admitting her reluctance to confide in the CSMV. In Ramabai’s opinion the CSMV was not interested in her religious doubts, it was only interested in her submission to Church authority. Around mid-year of 1885 if not sooner, Ramabai ceased attending confession. This was of grave concern to the Community. It looked for specific signs indicative of a convert’s progression in the Faith and apart from moral evidence of that progression, it expected conformity to its religious culture. Confession was a useful barometer of the seriousness of a convert to adhere to that culture and a measure of the diligence in which he or she sought for holiness of life. It was also a ritual re-enactment of submission to the Church’s authority and of the acceptance of its teachings.

103 Ramabai to Sister Geraldine June 25, 1885; Dorothea Beale to Canon Butler, July, 1885, Letters and Correspondence pp 68, 78.
104 Dorothea Beale to Sister Geraldine, April 1885, Letters and Correspondence p 33. Letter from the Reverend Charles Gore to Dorothea Beale, April 14 1885, Beale Correspondence C.L.C.
105 Ramabai to Canon Butler July 3, 1885, Letters and Correspondence pp 73-75.
106 Ramabai to Geraldine, June 25, 1885, Letters and Correspondence p 68.
107 Ramabai to Geraldine, June 25, 1885, Letters and Correspondence p 68
108 The CSMV regarded obedience and humility as key attributes of the religious life. See Ramabai’s letter to Dorothea Beale, August 1885, Letters and Correspondence pp 131-134.
Regular attendance at confession therefore, was a sign to the CSMV of the genuineness of conversion. 111

Ramabai’s rejection of the practice of confession was an indication to the Community that her commitment to the Church was wavering. 112 Whilst Sister Geraldine attributed Ramabai’s loss of confidence in the CSMV to the influence of Mrs Gilmore, she also believed that Dorothea Beale had played an influential role by encouraging Ramabai to believe she was independent of the Community. 113 As a result the CSMV was determined to curb Ramabai’s independence and bring her back under the authority of the Church. 114 This decision was not influenced by the Sanskrit Debate alone. The Trinitarian Controversy also surfaced publicly at this time increasing the tension between Ramabai and the CSMV. The two disputes were running concurrently throughout the early part of 1885 with the CSMV struggling to maintain its influence over Ramabai whilst she struggled for her independence. 115

Ramabai’s dissatisfaction with the CSMV was fuelled by various sources of opposition to high church Anglicanism with which she was in contact. Not one of the sources was decisive in itself but in combination they provided her with various religious options apart from the CSMV. As we shall see

110 Ibid, p 81.
111 Ibid pp 77-78. Pickering makes the valid point that confession was often taken as the sign of conversion within anglo-catholic and high church Anglicanism; not only the convert’s initial act of confession but in his/her continuation of the practice.
112 Sister Geraldine to the Bishop of Oxford (undated); Mrs Poole to Sister Geraldine, June 1885; Ramabai to Sister Geraldine, June 25, 1885, Letters and Correspondence, pp 29, 63, 68.
113 Sister Geraldine to the Dean of Lincoln, July 1 1885, Letters and Correspondence, pp 71-72.
114 Sister Geraldine to the Bishop of Oxford (undated letter) 1885; Sister Geraldine to Ramabai, May 10, 1885; Sister Geraldine to Dorothea Beale, May 10 1885, Letters and Correspondence, pp 29, 52-54.
115 Ramabai believed the CSMV was threatening her liberty. See Dorothea Beale’s letter to Canon Butler, July 1885, Letters and Correspondence, p 77.
opposition to the CSMV during 1885 came from Mrs Gilmore of the Zenana Bible and Medical Mission; Dr Richard Glover and Isaac Allen of the Tyndale Baptist Church in Bristol, as well as members of the Brahmo Samaj Movement in India. Ramabai was also in touch with English Unitarians.\textsuperscript{116} Francis Power Cobbe claimed her as a friend as did Miss Manning of the National Indian Association.\textsuperscript{117} Ramabai expressed her frustration to Dorothea Beale in these words,

"You can very well imagine how hard I have to struggle sometimes, between the Prayer Book, the Bible and the Hindoo religion and my different understandings about them, with no one but my own limited knowledge of these books and the Spirit of God which passes my understanding to help me."\textsuperscript{118}

Adding to the emotional context of these months was Ramabai’s health. Over the winter of 1884/1885 she experienced frequent head-aches and emotional stress dating back to the death of Anandabai Bhagat.\textsuperscript{119} She also had respiratory problems but insisted on wearing a sari, which in spite of warm undergarments was not a particularly satisfactory garment for an English winter.\textsuperscript{120} It is not difficult to conclude that stress both mental and physical was taking its toll on her during this period.

\textbf{Mrs Gilmore}

In April of 1885 Ramabai spent a fortnight in London with Mrs Gilmore of the Zenana Bible and Medical Mission at 3 Montagu Place, Montagu Square, London. After her return from that visit both Geraldine and Dorothea noticed a

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{116} Dorothea Beale to Bishop Myline May 22, 1884, \textit{Letters and Correspondence} p 40.
\bibitem{117} Frances Power Cobbe, Letter to the Editor, \textit{The Times} Oct 1, 1897; Ramabai, \textit{Voyage to England} p 10.
\bibitem{118} Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, June 21, 1885, \textit{Letters and Correspondence} p 156.
\bibitem{119} Dorothea Beale to the Bishop of Bombay, May 22, 1894; Ramabai to Sister Geraldine July 1894; Ramabai to Sister Geraldine, August 13, 1899 \textit{Letters and Correspondence} pp 26, 40, 220.
\bibitem{120} Dorothea Beale to Sister Geraldine, Jan 3 1885, Jan 12 1885, \textit{Letters and Correspondence} pp 30–31; Ramabai, \textit{Voyage to England} p 22.
\end{thebibliography}
change in Ramabai's demeanour. She was no longer as open or as communicative
with the CSMV as she had previously been. It was shortly after this visit
that Ramabai ceased attending confession.

Isabella Gilmore was the sister of William Morris, artist, craftsman
and socialistic. She rented 3 Montagu Place, Montagu Square from 1885-1888. In 1887 she was ordained a deaconess by the Bishop of Rochester and appointed head of the Rochester Deaconess Institution at Clapham. During 1895 Isabella worked as a nursing sister at Guy's Hospital. She was also a frequent speaker for the Zenana Bible and Medical Mission. In 1883 she was listed as a speaker for the Mission on twenty two occasions between September 3, and November 29 1883. Her particular topic was "dissolving views". "Dissolving views" as Frank M Turner has described, referred to critical views

121 Sister Geraldine, Letters and Correspondence, pp 19-20; Dorothea Beale to Canon Butler, July 1895, Letters and Correspondence, p 77.
122 Mrs Poole's letter to Geraldine of June 1885, referred to the deterioration in Ramabai's spiritual life. Ramabai admitted she no longer attended confession in her letter to Geraldine of the 25th June 1886 See Letters and Correspondence pp 63, 68.
123 The City of Westminster Heritage Research confirmed in a letter to the present writer (dated the 20th April 1990), that Mrs I Gilmore had resided at Montagu Square from 1885-1888. Confirmation that Isabella Gilmore resided at 3 Montagu Place during this period was provided by the curator of the William Morris Gallery in a letter to the present writer, dated the 22nd March 1991. The identification of Mrs Gilmore with Isabella Gilmore has therefore been made on the basis of a common address. Likewise the identification of Mrs I Gilmore of the Zenana Bible and Medical Mission was also made on the basis of the address at Montagu Place. Mrs Gilmore of the Zenana Bible and Medical Mission was listed as residing at the above address during the period in question in the Indian Female Evangelist 1886, Vol 8 p 341.
125 Isabella had accepted the responsibility of her brother Rendall's children. See Janet Grierson, op.cit., pp 33-34.
126 Indian Female Evangelist Vol 2, 1884, pp 45, 100.
127 Indian Female Evangelist Vol 2, 1884, p 100.
emanating from the physical sciences and higher criticism of the Bible which threatened to "dissolve" the Christian faith.\textsuperscript{128}

In 1886 Isabella Gilmore was listed as a Secretary of the Zenana Bible and Medical Mission.\textsuperscript{129} During that year she wrote an article, "What Hath God Wrought?" on the history of the separation of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society from the Zenana Bible and Medical Mission. In it she stated that the object of the Zenana Bible and Medical Mission was not to convert a person to a particular sect but rather to Christianity. She believed that the strength of the Society lay in its commitment to interdenominationalism and to Henry Venn's policy of self supporting indigenous churches.\textsuperscript{130} Isabella Gilmore was able to inform Ramabai on the Mission's work in India, particularly in Bombay and Nasik.\textsuperscript{131} Missionaries were returning to England regularly on furlough and frequently spoke at meetings of the Mission. Ramabai had the opportunity during April of meeting men and women, who like Isabella, shared her concern for the women of India but whose organization was avowedly interdenominational.\textsuperscript{132}

After her ordination, Isabella maintained a strong interest in Indian missions.\textsuperscript{133} In 1897 when Manoramabai was considering a medical career, Isabella Gilmore encouraged her by taking her to a dinner for medical students and introducing her to other young people.\textsuperscript{134}


\textsuperscript{129} Indian Female Evangelist Vol 8, 1886, p 341.

\textsuperscript{130} Mrs I Gilmore, "What Hath God Wrought?" Indian Female Evangelist Vol 8, no 60, pp 341ff.

\textsuperscript{131} Ibid, p 343.


\textsuperscript{133} Elizabeth Robinson, Deaconess Gilmore, pp 29-30.

\textsuperscript{134} Manoramabai to Sister Geraldine, November 21, 1897, Notebooks of Sister Geraldine, no 7.
In 1885 Isabella Gilmore was rightly described by Dorothea Beale as "a good woman with rather strong Protestant sympathies." Whilst Isabella was critical of Tractarianism, she could hardly be described as a rabid evangelical, as according to her biographers she placed her brother's daughters in a convent school. However, she clearly disapproved of Wantage. Consequently, Sister Geraldine was concerned about Isabella's influence on Ramabai. At one time she appeared to regard Isabella as the root of all of Ramabai's criticisms of tractarian culture. In analysing Isabella's influence on Ramabai a number of possible incidents come to mind. The first was Ramabai's reluctance to attend confession. Evangelical opposition to confession as smacking of "popery" was well known, so too was its criticism that Tractarianism sanctioned customs and usages not supported by biblical authority. Ramabai defended her opposition to confession precisely on the basis of its lack of biblical authority. Whilst Mrs Gilmore was not the only evangelical influence on Ramabai during this period, she and the Baptists at Bristol would have reinforced one another in their opposition to tractarian culture on the basis of its lack of biblical authority and its "romanizing" tendencies. In mid 1885 Ramabai declared her commitment to the Bible and refused to accept any belief or practice which could not be justified from it.

Secondly, Isabella may have alerted Ramabai to another option for

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135 Beale to Butler, July 1885, Letters and Correspondence, p 79-79.
137 Beale to Butler, July 1885, Letters and Correspondence, pp 77.
138 Ramabai to Sister Geraldine, March 9, Letters and Correspondence p 34.
139 Sister Geraldine, Letters and Correspondence, pp 19-20.
140 Ramabai to Sister Geraldine, June 25, Letters and Correspondence, p 68.
141 Richard Glover's criticism of Wantage was recorded in his entry on "Isaac Allen" in the Baptist Handbook of 1911.
142 Ramabai to Canon Butler, July 1885; Ramabai to Sister Geraldine, St Hilda's Sunday; Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, June 21 1885, Letters and Correspondence pp 79-80, 152, 157-158.
achieving her goal for the "uplift" of Indian women. The interdenominationalism of the Zenana Bible and Medical Mission appeared to offer considerable scope for individual liberty, and in light of Ramabai's antisectarianism, its more charitable attitude towards other Protestant denominations would have provided a welcome contrast to the sectarianism of the CSMV. 143 A third possible source of Isabella's influence was Ramabai's explanation of her rift with Anglicanism. She declared that she had been converted to Christianity and not to a particular denomination. 144 It was precisely this point which Mrs Gilmore had argued was the aim of the work of her Society.

**Sanskrit Lessons**

The Sanskrit Debate flared again in April 1885 when a young man from The Cheltenham College (Boys) approached The Cheltenham Ladies' College seeking tuition in Sanskrit from Ramabai. 145 Dorothea Beale requested Sister Geraldine to permit Ramabai to accept him as a pupil. She reminded Geraldine that although the objections primarily had come from the Bishops of Lahore and Bombay, she believed that they had never fully understood the situation. 146

Geraldine's reply to Dorothea cannot be divorced from the Trinitarian controversy. She believed with Mother Harriet that the objections of the bishops to Ramabai tutoring males in Sanskrit could not be set aside. 147 Not only was Ramabai forbidden to accept a male student but the matter was to be made an occasion for her to learn obedience. Both Geraldine and Mother Harriet were of

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145 Dorothea Beale to Sister Geraldine, April 1885; Geraldine to Ramabai May 10, 1885, *Letters and Correspondence* pp 46, 51.
146 Beale to Geraldine, April 1885, *Letters and Correspondence* pp 46-47.
147 Sister Geraldine to Dorothea Beale, May 6, 1885, *Letters and Correspondence* p 47.
the opinion that Ramabai was "a little inclined to take too independent a line." 148

Crisis May 8

Ramabai’s letter of the 8th May to Dorothea Beale indicated that the situation was serious. Ramabai referred to a letter received that morning from Geraldine confirming that the CSMV had refused her permission to tutor. Geraldine’s statement in reference to the episcopal correspondence that she felt bound "to accept the opinion of those who from their knowledge of India and its people are far better judges than ourselves in the matter," had angered Ramabai. She rejected the inference that any Englishman could know her country and its people better than she. She reminded Dorothea that although women did not as a rule teach in her country, it was because they had not the education to do so. Conversely she argued, she had travelled widely over India and had often lectured to mixed audiences. On many occasions, she stated, her audiences had been entirely composed of men. She did not believe her influence would be weakened by tutoring a boy in Sanskrit. She therefore rejected the opinions of the bishops, and their "knowledge of India." 149

The tone of the letter revealed something of the anger and frustration which had been building up in Ramabai over the few months. She dismissed the authority of bishops or of anyone else who would attempt to interfere with her life.

"In such a matter and in all other matters, I shall speak openly and plainly that they have no right to decide anything for me. And I shall not allow anyone to lay hand on my personal liberty. I have taken all matters concerning me in my own hand. Although I am poor and weak in body I have (thank God Who has given me it) a mind strong enough to resist all these meaningless social customs which deprive a woman of her proper place in society." 150

148 Sister Geraldine to Dorothea Beale May 6, 1885, Letters and Correspondence p 47.
149 Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, 8th May 1885, Letters and Correspondence p 124.
150 Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, 8th May 1885, Letters and Correspondence p 124.
Ramabai had been shown the episcopal correspondence and she regarded the inference that an Indian woman could not know India as well as an Englishman a personal insult.\(^1\) Such was the depth of her anger she was prepared to sever her connections with the CSMV.\(^2\) Ramabai’s reference to “meaningless customs which deprive a woman of her proper place in society” and her rejection of Geraldine’s implications that her opinions were not worthy to be considered, had in her own words “deeply wounded” her. Ramabai’s letter of the 8th May clearly demonstrated her awareness of the racial and gender prejudice in the Sanskrit correspondence.\(^3\) She was however blissfully unaware that her disclosure of June 1884 had changed the nature of her relationship to the CSMV. Regarding her as a probable, if not actual postulant, the Community believed itself to be in a position of authority over her. As obedience was an important value to its religious culture, the Sanskrit Debate became a useful opportunity through which to test Ramabai’s fitness for community life.\(^4\)

After receiving Ramabai’s letter, Dorothea saw her personally and managed to obtain an assurance from her to let the matter rest for the remainder of the term.\(^5\) However in her letter to Geraldine, Dorothea wrote that the matter was very serious.\(^6\) She informed Geraldine that Ramabai believed that there was a vital principle at stake in the situation and that it was no longer an argument about giving lessons to young men but whether or not

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\(^1\) Ramabai to Geraldine, May 8 1885; Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, May 9th 1885, Letters and Correspondence, pp 25, 49–50, 124–125.

\(^2\) Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, 8th May 1885, Letters and Correspondence p 125.

\(^3\) Dorothea Beale to Sister Geraldine May 8, 1885, Letters and Correspondence, pp 40–49.

\(^4\) Geraldine to Dorothea Beale, May 6, 1885, Letters and Correspondence p 47.

\(^5\) Dorothea Beale to Sister Geraldine, May 8, 1885, Letters and Correspondence p 48.

\(^6\) Dorothea Beale to Sister Geraldine, May 8, 1885, Letters and Correspondence p 48.
women should be bound by meaningless customs. 157 Furthermore, added Dorothea, Ramabai had argued that to give in to such prejudice would dishonour the memory of her family, all of whom had approved of her lecturing to mixed audiences. 158 In her discussion with Dorothea, Ramabai had invoked Galatians 3: 28, arguing that Christ had clearly rejected gender prejudice as being incompatible with Christianity and therefore, any compromise on her part would be "against the spirit of Christianity." 159

In her letter to Geraldine of May 8, 1885, Ramabai made it clear that the implication of her racial inferiority which had been conveyed through Geraldine's letter was personally insulting. 160 The letter went further, noting as an example of Geraldine's racial prejudice her willingness to dismiss her (Ramabai's) own knowledge and experience of India as valueless and to accept definitive statements on India and its people from Englishmen. This, argued Ramabai, revealed how little Geraldine valued her knowledge and experience of India, which must surpass that of any Englishman. 161 Secondly, Ramabai complained of Geraldine's penchant for discussing with others plans for her future without including her, particularly with those who had little respect for her experience. 162 In conclusion, Ramabai warned Geraldine that she would sever her connections with Wantage if there was anymore interference with her "personal liberty." 163

157 Dorothea Beale to Sister Geraldine, May 8, 1885, Letters and Correspondence pp 48-49.
158 Dorothea Beale to Sister Geraldine, May 8, 1885, Letters and Correspondence p 48-49.
159 Dorothea Beale to Sister Geraldine May 8, 1885, Letters and Correspondence p 49.
160 Ramabai to Sister Geraldine May 8 1885, Letters and Correspondence p 50. See also Ramabai's letter to Dorothea Beale, May 8 1885, Letters and Correspondence p 124.
161 Ramabai to Geraldine May 8 1885, Letters and Correspondence p 50.
162 Ramabai to Geraldine, May 8, 1885, Letters and Correspondence p 50.
163 Ramabai to Geraldine, May 8, 1885, Letters and Correspondence p 50.
Apart from the issues of gender and racial prejudice which Ramabai was quick to identify, there was a deep seated conflict emerging between herself and Geraldine over the issue of authority. Ramabai was constrained by the culture and expectations of the CSMV and she invoked the principle of "personal liberty" against the demand for submission to the authority of the Church. Liberty consequently became a major theme of this Debate. It was a concept particularly dear to Richard Glover of Bristol, who had left Presbyterianism to become a Baptist because he believed there was greater scope for individual expression and personal liberty within the Baptist Church.\textsuperscript{164} Ramabai was in correspondence with Glover and spent time at Bristol with him and with Isaac Allen during this period.\textsuperscript{165}


\textsuperscript{165} Ramabai to Sister Geraldine May 12 1885, \textit{Letters and Correspondence} pp 58-60.
Geraldine defended herself against Ramabai's criticisms in her reply of May 10, 1885. She maintained that all arrangements for Ramabai to tutor in Sanskrit were made by Dorothea Beale without the knowledge of the CSMV. Furthermore, she argued, it had been Dorothea Beale who agreed to cancel the arrangements on the advice of the Indian bishops. According to Geraldine the CSMV were only apprised of the situation at a later stage. Geraldine's account however appears to contradict Dorothea Beale's statement to the Bishop of Bombay that she had the support of the CSMV in arranging the Sanskrit lectures. Geraldine also rejected any suggestion that the Community was depriving Ramabai of her personal liberty in any way. She wrote, "I did not say that you, but that we, felt bound to accept the opinion of those who from their experience of India knew more than ourselves of the mind of the people." 

Geraldine retreated into her rule of obedience conveniently forgetting her letter to Dorothea in which she suggested that the Sanskrit Debate be made an occasion for Ramabai to learn obedience. She went on to say in her letter of the 10th May that the bishops were correct in advising Miss Beale that if Ramabai were to teach males, it would be an unwise departure from Indian custom. Ramabai's experiences addressing various audiences in India was dismissed by Geraldine as untypical of the Indian situation. She argued that the bishops only had Ramabai's best interest at heart and were concerned lest she jeopardize her future usefulness with the Church. The substance of

166 Sister Geraldine to Ramabai, May 10, 1885, Letters and Correspondence p 51.
167 Sister Geraldine to Ramabai, May 10, 1885, Letters and Correspondence p 51.
168 Dorothea Beale to the Bishop of Bombay, May 22 1884, Letters and Correspondence p 41.
169 Geraldine to Ramabai, May 10, 1885, Letters and Correspondence p 52.
170 Geraldine to Ramabai, May 10, 1885, Letters and Correspondence pp 51-52.
171 Geraldine to Ramabai, May 10, 1885, Letters and Correspondence p 51.
172 Geraldine to Ramabai, May 10, 1885, Letters and Correspondence pp 51-52.
Geraldine's argument for Ramabai's compliance with the episcopal will was based upon her belief in British superiority coupled with her commitment to the traditional role of women as one of submission to male authority. She wrote,

"Let me tell you, dear Ramabai, that I think there is a difference in addressing mixed audiences of your country-people, and in giving lessons to young Englishmen." 173

The difference according to Geraldine lay in the differing social values of England and India. In India the status of women was deplorable and God had allowed Ramabai to address males in order to stir their consciences. But, argued Geraldine, there were no comparable social conditions in England to warrant such a breach of Indian custom. 174 Parents who wanted their sons to study Sanskrit could enrol them at London or Oxford. 175 Ramabai's departure from established custom was therefore justified by Geraldine as a divinely sanctioned response to extraordinary circumstances and not to be read as a precedent. But even then, stated Geraldine, Ramabai had acted under the authority of the Syndicate of Calcutta, (a reference to the pandits who had bestowed on Ramabai the title of Saraswati). 176 In other words it was in obedience to male authority that Ramabai had publicly lectured. Geraldine's message was clear. Ramabai's knowledge and experience of India, rather than a testimony to the enormous religious diversity of the country was dismissed as untypical and her experiences in lecturing to mixed audiences throughout the country was regarded as an aberration. Geraldine left Ramabai with no doubt that it was not she but the bishops, who knew the real state of affairs in India. 177

In the second part of the letter, Geraldine replied to the charge that the CSMV were interfering with Ramabai's liberty. She argued, citing Ruskin,
that true liberty was not licence but obedience to law. Geraldine clearly indicated she believed Ramabai’s notion of independence contravened expected feminine behaviour, social and religious. As a prospective postulant, her reluctance to obey those in authority, indicated to Geraldine that Ramabai was becoming arrogant. She wrote,

"Only strike the roots of Humility deep in the soil and in time the seed which has been sown in your heart will grow up to a full and perfect tree and will bear fruit abundantly."  

Geraldine also dispatched a letter to Dorothea Beale on the 10th May, enclosing a copy of her correspondence with Ramabai regarding the Sanskrit lessons and making it very clear to her that Ramabai did not lecture during her parents' lifetime. She also added that when Ramabai did become an itinerant lecturer she did so under the authority of her brother.  

Bristol

In May of 1885 Ramabai visited Isaac Allen at Bristol. In her letter of May 10, Geraldine responded to this information by informing Dorothea that she was unhappy with the degree of liberty being accorded to Ramabai at Cheltenham. Ramabai had been allowed to go to Bristol without permission from the Community on more than one occasion. Geraldine asked Dorothea what arrangements had been made for the current visit, reminding her that it was customary both in England and in India for young women to be chaperoned on such occasions. Geraldine added,

"Though in one sense on a very different footing from the other students at the College, yet from her being a young convert and a foreigner and one who has everything to learn both as regards the Faith and as regards the manners and customs of English people, we feel she needs as carefully guarding and as much holding in as those who are much younger in point of age than

178 Sister Geraldine to Ramabai, May 10. 1885, Letters and Correspondence pp 52-53.
179 Geraldine to Ramabai, May 10, 1885, Letters and Correspondence p 53.
180 Geraldine to Dorothea, May 10, 1885, Letters and Correspondence p 53.
181 Ramabai to Geraldine, May 12, 1885, Letters and Correspondence p 58.
The above comment reveals something of the complexity of Geraldine's relationship with Ramabai. Her attempt to impose upon Ramabai the social restrictions of unmarried women much younger in age, although at the time Ramabai was a twenty-seven-year-old widow, was paternalistic and racially biased. It also highlighted the rationale behind her attempt to control Ramabai and to avert a possible threat to that control posed by Baptist influence.\textsuperscript{183}

On May 12, Dorothea wrote to Geraldine urging her come to Cheltenham. She believed the situation with Ramabai to be critical. She also referred cryptically that she had little choice but to yield to Ramabai, a reference most likely to the unauthorized trip to Bristol.\textsuperscript{184}

Richard Glover

In the light of Ramabai's difficulties with Anglican doctrine and authority and the attempt by the CSMV to control her movements, Richard Glover's views on such issues were seminal. Glover was the minister of the Tyndale Baptist Church Bristol and a close friend of Isaac Allen.\textsuperscript{185} He was personally opposed to forms of church government which sought to impose too much control on the individual Christian. He wrote,

"I am comparatively indifferent to forms of church government, personally preferring those which give most scope to individual action and possess most elasticity."\textsuperscript{186}

\textsuperscript{182} Geraldine to Dorothea, May 10, 1885, Letters and Correspondence p 54.
\textsuperscript{183} Sister Geraldine, Letters and Correspondence p 400.
\textsuperscript{184} Dorothea Beale to Sister Geraldine, May 12, 1885, Letters and Correspondence p 55.
\textsuperscript{185} Glover's ministry at Tyndale extended from 1869-1911. See "The Reverend Richard Glover" biographical notes (unpublished) compiled by David T Roberts.
As a Baptist, Glover believed that authority was grounded in the local community of believers.\(^\text{187}\) Similarly he was committed to the priesthood of all believers and opposed to any notion of clerical mediation between the individual soul and God.\(^\text{188}\) The Baptists have a long history of political resistance to the authority of the Church of England and of theological opposition to its teachings on a number of issues, including the sacraments, ecclesiology and tradition, which could not have been more at odds with the culture of the CSMV.\(^\text{189}\) Nor is it insignificant, given Ramabai’s difficulties with the episcopal conservatism on gender, that Glover and Allen were General Baptists.\(^\text{190}\) As such they had a more liberal attitude than other Baptists to the role of women. Similarly they were not threatened by “dissolving views.”\(^\text{191}\) They could therefore be described as evangelicals of more liberal persuasions.

Although Richard Glover had a deep interest in missions, particularly in India and China, he declined the position of Secretary of the Baptist Missionary Society in India and the ministry at the Circular Road Church in Calcutta in 1879 preferring to continue his ministry at Bristol.\(^\text{192}\) Richard’s wife, Anna, was also involved with missions, particularly in raising funds for Zena work.\(^\text{193}\)


\(^{191}\) Ibid; Roger Hayden, op.cit., p 134.


In 1911 on the occasion of the death of Isaac Allen, Richard Glover sketched an outline of his friend’s life. In it he mentioned Ramabai’s visit to his home at Bristol in 1885 and her connection with Isaac Allen in Dacca. He wrote with reference to Ramabai that Isaac Allen regarded his work with her as one of his "sweetest recollections." He also mentioned Ramabai’s association with Wantage which he regarded as detrimental to her growth as a Christian. He wrote,

"Though her (Ramabai) settlement was delayed by falling in with extremely High Church missionaries, she was delighted some years after to meet Mr Allen in Bristol and to spend two days in gathering from him the truer, simpler Gospel, which first had comforted her and to which, rejecting all priestly pretensions she returned, and found in it the strength by which she has lifted and illumined so many thousands of her fellow country-women."

The row between Geraldine and Ramabai which erupted upon the latter’s return from Bristol was influenced by competing Baptist and Anglican ideologies. Ramabai was enraged upon receipt of Geraldine’s letters concerning the matter of the Sanskrit lessons. She believed her personal liberty was being threatened by the Church of England. In her reply to Geraldine, she stated categorically that she was not bound by Geraldine’s rule of obedience and therefore did not have to accept episcopal decisions. She wrote,

"It seems to me that you are advising me under the W.E to accept the will of those who have the authority, etc. This however I cannot accept. I have a conscience and mind and a judgement of my own, I must myself think and do everything which GOD has given me the power of doing."

By these words Ramabai refuted any commitment she may have given to Canon Butler and Sister Geraldine on June 17, 1884. She rejected the Community’s rule of obedience as being in any way relevant to her, affirming

197 Ramabai to Geraldine, May 12, 1885, Letters and Correspondence, p 59
198 Ramabai to Geraldine, May 12, 1885, Letters and Correspondence, p 59.
instead the liberty of the individual conscience. The Bristol influence was
decisive. It was likewise apparent in her rejection of episcopacy and her
affirmation of the priesthood of all believers.\footnote{199} Illustrating her contempt for
priestly wisdom, she related to Geraldine the story of the European padre who
had been convinced that her decision to leave India was a grave error and her
association with Wantage even more disastrous.\footnote{200} Instead, as Ramabai
informed Geraldine, the decision to leave India had been her own response to the
inner voice of God, a decision which had the support and the assistance of the
Wantage Sisters.\footnote{201} Geraldine's belief that obedience to the bishops was
obedience to God was countered by Ramabai with obedience to the Holy Spirit. In
her letter to Geraldine, Ramabai rejected the authority of bishops and priests in
words very reminiscent of Glover's comments on Wantage.\footnote{202} She wrote,

"I have just with great efforts freed myself from the yoke of the
Indian priestly tribe and I am not at present willing to place myself under
another similar yoke by accepting everything which comes from the priests as
authorised command of the Most High."\footnote{203}

Ramabai also took Geraldine to task about a number of errors in her
last letter. She rejected the suggestion that she had lectured under the
authority of the Senate of the University of Calcutta. Rather, she maintained it
had been the example of the Brahmo Samaj and its commitment to female
education which had inspired her to lecture.\footnote{204} In addition she argued, avoiding
social intercourse with men would not benefit her work with women. She said,

"I am not anxious to give lessons to young men, but I am anxious to do
away with all kinds of prejudices which deprive a woman in India of her proper
place in society. Can I confine my work only to women in India and have nothing
to do with men? I do not think so. To help the women to come forward in the
society I must first of all urge upon men, and teach men of poorer classes.

\footnotesize{\footnote{199} Ramabai to Geraldine, May 12, 1885, \textit{Letters and Correspondence} p 69.
\footnote{200} Ramabai, \textit{Voyage to England} p 8.
\footnote{201} Ramabai to Geraldine May 12, 1885, \textit{Letters and Correspondence} p 59.
\footnote{202} Richard Glover, "Isaac Allen" \textit{Baptist Handbook} 1911 p 474.
\footnote{203} Ramabai to Geraldine, May 12, 1885, \textit{Letters and Correspondence} p 59.
\footnote{204} Ramabai to Geraldine, May 12, 1885, \textit{Letters and Correspondence} p 59}
Then when men are convinced of the necessity of elevating the condition of their women, I shall have access to their Zananas.\textsuperscript{205}

Ramabai denied Geraldine's implication that her parents (had they lived), would have refused her permission to lecture. She supported this assumption by reference to her mother's teaching of males in her father's ashram. She also treated with contempt Geraldine's comment that all Indian women were "hedged in". Some may be, she retorted but not "Marathi Brahmin women."\textsuperscript{206} Rejecting the premise that her understanding of liberty was tantamount to lawlessness, Ramabai affirmed her right to control her own destiny. In concluding her letter she wrote that she would respect the fact that Miss Beale had given her word to the bishops on this matter but not to expect that she would so easily comply in future.\textsuperscript{207}

Geraldine made an urgent visit to Cheltenham between May 12 and May 24. At that meeting emotions were settled on all sides, friendships rekindled and the Sanskrit Debate essentially concluded. The damage however had been done. Ramabai's problems with Anglican doctrine and authority had not diminished. In the context of the Trinitarian Controversy Ramabai confided to Dorothea Beale that her experiences of Hinduism had made her very cautious about embracing its errors in any other form.\textsuperscript{208} Therefore, her acceptance of Christianity could not be, as Geraldine desired, simply a matter of faith; it had to be equally a matter of conviction. Towards the end of May, Ramabai was arguing with Dorothea about the irrationality of miracles, a discussion she could never have had with Geraldine.\textsuperscript{209}

\textsuperscript{205} Ramabai to Geraldine, May 12, 1885, Letters and Correspondence p 61.
\textsuperscript{206} Ramabai to Sister Geraldine, May 12, 1885, Letters and Correspondence pp 60-61.
\textsuperscript{207} Ramabai to Sister Geraldine, May 12, 1885, Letters and Correspondence pp 60-61.
\textsuperscript{208} Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, May 1885; Ramabai to Dorothea (undated) 1885, Letters and Correspondence pp 145, 155-156.
\textsuperscript{209} Ramabai to Dorothea Beale May 31, 1885, Letters and Correspondence pp 155-156.
On the 24th May with Ramabai placated, Dorothea and Geraldine continued their correspondence about her future.\textsuperscript{210} Dorothea confessed to Geraldine that she believed Ramabai lacked the administrative ability to be head of any institution, suggesting that Geraldine might consider such a role for herself.\textsuperscript{211} In spite of the difficulties of the previous months, Ramabai was still interested in establishing a teaching institution in India, although in light of her rejection of tractarian culture, it was highly improbable that she continued to envisage such an institution in the Wantage tradition.\textsuperscript{212} Instead it may well have been the Sanskrit Debate which proved to be influential in her consideration of an entirely different institution, that is, one which was entirely independent of sectarian control. On May 25, Geraldine wrote that Ramabai appeared happier. She concurred with Dorothea that Ramabai did not possess the administrative abilities to be head of an institution, suggesting instead that she could work in conjunction with the CSMV mission in Poona.\textsuperscript{213} Geraldine also added with reference to the Trinitarian Controversy that she had requested Charles Gore to spend some time with Ramabai.\textsuperscript{214}

\textbf{The Sanskrit Debate Concludes}

In June, Bishop Mylne wrote to Sister Geraldine criticizing her for treating Ramabai as a religious. Only as a member of the Community, he wrote, would she have been required to obey his directives. As a woman in the world

\textsuperscript{210} The Sanskrit lectures never eventuated but Ramabai was introduced to the College community by two articles in the Cheltenham College Magazine: "Ramabai Sanskrita" and "Notes of Conversations with Ramabai" See the C.L.C.M. September 1884 pp 116-119, 120-121.
\textsuperscript{211} Dorothea Beale to Sister Geraldine May 24, 1885, \textit{Letters and Correspondence} pp 55-56.
\textsuperscript{212} Dorothea Beale to Sister Geraldine May 24, 1885, \textit{Letters and Correspondence} pp 55-56.
\textsuperscript{213} Sister Geraldine to Dorothea Beale, May 25, 1885, \textit{Letters and Correspondence} pp 61-62.
\textsuperscript{214} Sister Geraldine to Dorothea Beale, May 25, 1885, \textit{Letters and Correspondence} pp 61-62.
and a widow, he continued, she had been under no obligation. He reminded Geraldine that there was a difference in the obedience expected of a religious and the obedience expected of the laity and he asked,

"Have you not been treating her a little as if you did not recognize this distinction?"\(^{215}\)

Mylne informed Geraldine that he had no doubt his advice had been correct and that it was Ramabai who was in error. However he was concerned that the situation had not been handled correctly and that Ramabai was drifting away from the Church. Believing Geraldine had sought to impose too much control upon Ramabai, he informed her that he would personally write to Ramabai in an attempt to minimise the damage. He said,

"It seems to be a case for trying to convince the judgment and to point out how the judgment may be warped by self-will. It does not seem to me one for saying that duty demands that one should forgo the right to judge at all."\(^{216}\)

The Sanskrit Debate had touched Ramabai’s deepest instincts arousing old feelings of sexual inequality and oppression. Its implications of racial inferiority likewise had offended her ethnic sensibilities. Together with attempts made by Geraldine, Dorothea and the Indian bishops to exert varying degrees of control over her, the Debate was transformed into one of principle, which Ramabai encapsulated in the word, "liberty".\(^{217}\) In her letter to Geraldine of May 12, she wrote,

"I do not think I shall say anything on behalf of my liberty. You have yourself misunderstood this my word, and give sermons about it. As far as I know from the time I have had a real liberty, I have not acted as a lawless woman and never want to do so. When people decide anything for me, without consulting with me about it, I of course call it interfering with my liberty, and am

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215 Bishop Mylne to Sister Geraldine, June 5, 1885, *Letters and Correspondence* pp 56-57
216 Mylne to Sister Geraldine, June 5, 1885, *Letters and Correspondence* pp 56-57.
217 Ramabai to Geraldine, May 12, 1885, *Letters and Correspondence* p 61.
not willing to let them do it. 218

The Sanskrit Debate exposed the tensions in Ramabai’s relationship with the CSMV. As the Community sought to impose more control upon her, the Baptists appeared to offer more attractive options. Their hostility to the Church of England provided Ramabai with counter arguments in her struggle for independence from the CSMV. In contrast to the religious culture of the Community, the Baptists drew her towards a Christian tradition which advocated the liberty of the individual Christian. A liberty which not only extended to Church government and authority but one which gave her permission to retain her Christian identity and yet forge a path of her own without clerical consent.

218 Ramabai to Sister Geraldine May 12, 1886, Letters and Correspondence, p 61.
Chapter 8: The Trinitarian Controversy

In 1885 the doctrine of the Trinity, specifically the deity of Christ, emerged as a further stumbling block to Ramabai's relationship with the CSMV. From the beginning she had doubts concerning the divinity of Christ but had attempted to quieten her intellectual reservations by force of will and by the exercise of faith, neither of which had proved successful.1 Unable to discuss her religious doubts freely with Sister Geraldine, partly because by not revealing her state of mind over the past year she had given her a false impression, Ramabai turned to Dorothea Beale for support.2 Dorothea in turn kept the CSMV informed of Ramabai's questions.3

The CSMV regarded the emergence of doubt in Ramabai's spiritual progress as evidence of a satanic attack at her weakest point, vanity.4 While Dorothea had a less judgemental attitude than Geraldine, she confided to Canon Butler that in her opinion Ramabai's doubts were being generated by her Indian correspondents.5 Ramabai had admitted to Dorothea that in response to her critics she had been unable to defend the intellectual viability of Trinitarianism as she herself was beleaguered with doubt.6

Ramabai's rejection of the deity of Christ logically led to her denial of the doctrine of the Trinity.7 She believed that the whole notion of a divine triad, in spite of assurances to the contrary, was little more than a sophisticated form

1 Ramabai to Geraldine September 22 1885, Letters and Correspondence pp 88-90.
2 Ramabai admitted as much to Dorothea. See Ramabai's letter to Dorothea Beale, October 12, 1885, Letters and Correspondence p 141.
3 Dorothea Beale to Sister Geraldine, Letters and Correspondence p 33.
4 Sister Geraldine to Pandita Ramabai, Oct 5, 1885, Letters and Correspondence p 92.
5 Dorothea Beale to Canon Butler, July 1885, Letters and Correspondence p 79.
6 Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, "St Hilda's Sunday" 1885, Letters and Correspondence p 151.
7 Ramabai to Sister Geraldine, September 20, 1885; September 22, 1885, Letters and Correspondence p 86,88-89.
of polytheism. It was in her opinion, intellectually unsustainable. Like members of the Brahma Movement, she regarded the accordance of divinity to anyone but God the Father as idolatrous.

Ramabai was further concerned that the notion of Christ's divinity smacked of Indian avatarism and thus of superstition. She regarded the Virgin Birth as scientifically untenable, while its implication that a mingling had occurred between the Divine Spirit and the impurities of gross matter, offended her cultural sensibilities deeply. Finally the Athanasian Creed excluded by its anathema Unitarians and Indian theists, amongst whom she counted many friends. The Athanasian Creed came to represent to her sectarianism at its most aggressive as well as intellectual fraud.

Although Ramabai had accepted Christianity she believed that Truth was not restricted to one faith or even to one source. It was an idea which was commonly held by the Brahma Samaj Movement and had been aggressively

8 Dorothea Beale to Pandita Ramabai, July 1885, Letters and Correspondence p 129.
9 Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, Oct 12, Letters and Correspondence p 141.
10 Ramabai to Dorothea Beale September 1, 1885, Letters and Correspondence pp 137-138. See Sen’s "That Marvellous Mystery The Trinity", Lectures in India pp 467-468.
11 Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, Summer of 1885, Letters and Correspondence p 145.
12 See the following letters of Ramabai to Dorothea Beale - 30th June 1885; "Summer" 1885; 1st September 1885, Letters and Correspondence pp 128, 146, 137.
13 Ramabai to Sister Geraldine, November 7 1885; Ramabai to Miss Noble, July 6 1886 Letters and Correspondence pp 112-113, 197.
14 Sister Geraldine to Ramabai, "Bath" 1885; Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, Oct 12, 1885; Ramabai to Sister Geraldine, November 7 1885; Letters and Correspondence pp 103, 141, 112-113. Sectarianism, as has already been discussed was abhorred by the Brahma Samaj. See also Pandit Sivanth Sastri, The Mission of the Brahma Samaj p 11.
15 "The Pandita Ramabai" Inter-Ocean, Chicago, December 10, 1897.
argued by Keshub Chunder Sen and the Church of the New Dispensation.\textsuperscript{16} And in spite of her conversion to Christianity it was not an idea which Ramabai had abandoned. She continued to believe that there had been various revelations of God throughout history.\textsuperscript{17} And whilst the Vedanta was imperfect in comparison with the New Testament, nevertheless, she believed it also enshrined divine truth.\textsuperscript{18} Accordingly both the philosophy of the Vedanta and of the Brahma Movement influenced the course of the Trinitarian Controversy.\textsuperscript{19} The influence of the Brahmo Samaj was further noticeable in Ramabai's appeal to rationalism to support her opposition to the deity of Christ, whilst evangelical influence was also discernible in her insistence that all Christian doctrine be biblically grounded.\textsuperscript{20} Essentially she believed the Bible lacked any clear unequivocal statements concerning Christ's divinity, whilst her appeal for biblical justification placed the onus upon Trinitarians to prove that it did.\textsuperscript{21}

\textbf{Cultural Influences: The Brahmo Samaj}

Dorothea's letter to Geraldine, April 1885, attributed Ramabai's difficulties with the deity of Christ to "Her training in the Brahmo Samaj."\textsuperscript{22}

\textsuperscript{17} "The Pundita Ramabai," \textit{Inter-Ocean}, Chicago, December 10, 1887.
\textsuperscript{18} "The Pundita Ramabai" \textit{Inter-Ocean Chicago}, December 10, 1887; Ramabai, "Indian Religion" C.L.C.M. No 13, Spring, pp 105-118.
\textsuperscript{19} Ramabai's opinion of the Vedanta as a source of divine truth can be seen in her article "Indian Religion" in which she quoted extensively from Sir Monier Monier Williams' \textit{Religious Life and Thought in India} and Max Müller's \textit{India and What Can it Teach Us} and \textit{The Sacred Books of the East}. See Ramabai's "Indian Religion" C.L.C.M. No 13, Spring pp 106-113.
\textsuperscript{20} Ramabai to Canon Butler, July 1885; August 15, 1885; Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, September 1, 1885; October 12, 1885, \textit{Letters and Correspondence} p 80, 132, 138, 150. See also Keshub Chunder Sen, "Jesus Christ, Europe and Asia, \textit{Lectures in India} p 29.
\textsuperscript{21} Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, "Summer" 1885; Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, October 12 \textit{Letters and Correspondence}, pp 143-150, 141.
\textsuperscript{22} Dorothea to Geraldine, April 1885; Dorothea to Canon Butler, July 1885, \textit{Letters and Correspondence} p 33, 78.
Ramabai's letter of the 31st May also revealed she had reservations with other supernatural aspects of Christianity, specifically miracles. 23 Throughout 1884 she had been studying the writings of Keshub Chunder Sen and Rammohun Roy. 24 She was in close contact with Samaj members in India; nor can the influence of English Unitarians be discounted. 25 Miss Collet, the historian of the Brahma Samaj Movement, sent Ramabai Brahma literature as did individual Samajists, thereby furnishing her with arguments against Christian Trinitarianism. 26 Brahmos were very critical of what they regarded as the irrationalism of certain tenets of Christianity. 27 Doctrines such as the Trinity and the Incarnation for example were not only questionable in their view but positively "mischievous" and more akin to the superstitions of popular Hinduism than to modern scientific rationalism. 28 Ramabai shared this opinion believing that miracles were not only highly improbable but totally unnecessary since God would not contravene His own law. 29

Ramabai's position regarding the status of Christ was identical to that

23 Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, 31st May, Letters and Correspondence pp 154-156. See also Dorothea Beale's letter to Geraldine, April 1885, Letters and Correspondence p 33 in which she attributed Ramabai's attitude to miracles to influence of the Brahma Samaj.
25 Evidence for English Unitarian influence on Ramabai is scanty. While it is known that she met with members of the Unitarian Church in England, she makes little mention of them.
26 Ramabai to Sister Geraldine, October 5, 1885; Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, "Summer" 1885; Ramabai to Dorothea Beale "St Hilda's Sunday" Letters and Correspondence 92,149- 151, 153. The Brahma Samaj regarded Trinitarianism as idolatry. See Pandit Sivanath Sastri, The Mission of the Brahma Samaj p 37. On Ramabai's contact with Miss Collett. See Ramabai's letter to Sister Geraldine, "Ash-Wednesday, 1884. Miss Collet may also have supplied her with Mazoomdar's The Oriental Christ. See Ramabai's letter to Dorothea Beale, April 1886, Letters and Correspondence pp 24, 171.
28 Ibid, pp 33, 37,39.
29 Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, 31st May, Letters and Correspondence pp 154-156; Pandit Sivanath Sastri, The Mission of the Brahma Samaj pp 4-5, 29,32.
held by Keshub Chunder Sen in the latter years of his life. In expressing her understanding of the nature of God she was quite content to speak like him in terms of a trinity of manifestations of God.\textsuperscript{30} Similarly she did not balk at attributing Sonship to Christ nor in accepting Christ as the first-born of creation or as an example of the divine potential in everyone.\textsuperscript{31} Likewise she was prepared to acknowledge Christ as Saviour and Messiah.\textsuperscript{32} But like Keshub, she rejected the identification of Christ with God.\textsuperscript{33}

\textbf{Madhva Vaishnavism}

The Christian doctrine of the Incarnation was particularly repugnant to Ramabai because of its suggestion of the co-mingling of spirit with matter.\textsuperscript{34} Such a thought in her eyes compromised the absolute purity of the Supreme Being, indeed His very nature. Madhva Vaishnavism argued that God and the World were separate principles and while the human soul can achieve bliss in the presence of God, it can never achieve union with the Supreme Being. Difference (Sādā) remained an important principle even in the state of bliss.\textsuperscript{35} Therefore no creature can attain either union or equality with God.\textsuperscript{36}

\textsuperscript{30} Dorothea Beale to unknown correspondent, November 30, 1885, \textit{Letters and Correspondence} pp 161; “Pundita Ramabai’s Views” \textit{Central New Jersey Times}, Plainfield, June 16, 1887; Sen, “The Future Church” \textit{India Asks, Who is Christ} “That Marvellous Mystery the Trinity” \textit{Lectures in India} pp 110-111, 366-367, 468.

\textsuperscript{31} Ramabai to Canon Butler, July 3 1885; Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, “Summer” 1885; Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, June 1885; Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, September 1, 1885; Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, “Summer” 1886, \textit{Letters and Correspondence} pp 74, 143-149, 151, 156-158, 147-148; Sen, “Great Men” \textit{India Asks, Who is Christ} \textit{Lectures in India} pp 47, 466-467

\textsuperscript{32} Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, June 21, 1885, \textit{Letters and Correspondence} pp 157-158;

\textsuperscript{33} Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, “Summer” 1885, \textit{Letters and Correspondence} pp 149-149; Sen, “That Marvellous Mystery The Trinity” \textit{Lectures in India} pp 467ff

\textsuperscript{34} Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, September 1, 1885, \textit{Letters and Correspondence} pp 136-137

\textsuperscript{35} Tapasyananda, \textit{Bhakti Schools of Vedánta} p 145, 173, 189; Ramachandran, \textit{Dvaita Vedánta} p 115.

\textsuperscript{36} Ramachandran, \textit{op.cit.}, pp 82, 100, 115; Tapasyananda, \textit{op.cit.}, 173,189.
There was a remarkable degree of consensus amongst Hindu sects that whilst God may incarnate in any form, such forms partake of the quality of Maya. To the Hindu the taking of human shape by the Supreme Being is no more a reality than is his assumption of the shape of an animal. It is Maya. It belongs to the world which is ephemeral and transient. As pure Spirit God does not and cannot assume a material body. Consequently for Ramabai, as for most Hindus, any doctrine of incarnation which posited the assumption of matter by God, compromised the absolute purity of the Godhead by polluting the Incorruptible Being with corruptible flesh. By contrast, Christian doctrine affirms that the Son of God assumed a material body, which was neither illusionary nor transient. The Council of Chalcedon committed orthodox Christianity to an acceptance of the ultimate reality of Christ's dual nature: truly God and truly man, expressed through one centre of consciousness by means of the communicatio idiomatum. Ramabai was repelled by such a suggestion and her objections to the doctrine of the Incarnation reflected her cultural background both as a Madhva Vaishnava and as a Brahmo. Appealing to the Vedanta, Ramabai wrote,

"To my understanding, it seems impossible that the boundless and most pure essence of our Heavenly Father should ever be limited or mixed with the impurities of the lower human nature, though it is everywhere and in every limited thing it is boundless and pure. Is not the same God who dwells in Christ

38 Sharma, op.cit., p 331; Ramachandran, op.cit., p 77; Boyd, An Introduction to Indian Christian Theology pp 128-129.
39 Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, June 30, 1885; Ramabai to Dorothea Beale "Summer" 1885, Letters and Correspondence pp 127-128, 144. See also Tapasyananda, Bhakti Schools of Vedanta, p 145; Pandit Sivanath Sastri, The Mission of the Brahmo Samaj p 33.
41 On Keshub's revulsion to the Chalcedonic formulae, see "That Marvellous Mystery the Trinity, Lectures in India" pp 469ff
dwelling in you and me, yet can we ever say that our lower nature can touch Him? No, the Upanishadas— the revelation of God to the Hindus, if I may call them so—teach that the Great Brahma which is in a manifest atom, yet is in His nature unbounded, and most pure, dwelling in everything, yet untouched by the lower nature, just as the lotus leaf though it grows in water, yet is not wetted by the water. If we do not agree with this teaching, we must either say that God is not omnipresent or that His essence can be defiled by or mixed with the lower nature of creatures, which is against Bible teaching.42

A further objection to the Incarnation by Ramabai reflected the combined influences of Vaishnavism and Brahma morality. She confided to Dorothea Beale that,

"Conceived by the Holy Ghost is an extremely repulsive expression to the mind which thinks of God in reverence. It does not only seem to bring the Supreme God to the level of a man but also of a sinful man, as we read that the Virgin was betrothed to a man and was afterwards married to him.43

If Ramabai was repelled by the suggestion that the doctrine of the Incarnation suggested the mingling of spirit and matter, the pure with the impure, she was equally repulsed by its sexual connotations.44 The notion of the Supreme Being impregnating, albeit metaphorically, a betrothed woman was repugnant. Its offense was twofold, firstly in the association of God with what appeared to be a specific act of sexuality and secondly in the apparent disregard for Mary's status as a betrothed woman.45 Although an incarnate such as Krishna could be celebrated for his sexual prowess, such myths were considered crude, irrational and immoral by both Madhva Vaishnavas and Brahma Samajists.46

Ramabai likewise had difficulties with the doctrine of Atonement, traditional theories of which are based upon the dual nature of Christ. For

42 Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, 1st September 1885, Letters and Correspondence p 136.
43 Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, November 29 1885, Letters and Correspondence p 159.
44 See also Dorothea Beale's letter to Sister Geraldine, April 22nd 1885, Letters and Correspondence p 32.
45 Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, November 29, Letters and Correspondence p 159.
according to Dvaita Vedanta, God is impassible. The divine nature cannot suffer. It is free from all material defilement and all limitations, including misery. Rather, God is the embodiment of bliss itself, any diminution of which would effect a change in the divine nature. Although Christian orthodoxy is clear that it was the human not the divine nature of Christ which suffered and died, such distinctions relating to the dual nature of Christ were not commonly made in scripture, much less in preaching. It was far more usual to speak of Christ as one entity, hence the temptation to regard one nature as more dominant than the other. The Reverend Charles Gore, librarian of Fusey House and examining chaplain to the Bishop of Lincoln, believed that the tendency to overemphasize the divinity of Christ almost to the exclusion of his humanity was the particular fault of Anglicanism in his generation. Therefore, when Ramabai was taught that the second person of the Godhead, Jesus, not only suffered and died on the cross for the sins of the world, but that God the Father had "made him to be sin, who knew not sin" (R.S.V. 2 Corinthians 5:21.), it was the antithesis of everything she had been brought up to believe about the divine nature.

By 1885 the deity of Christ posed an insurmountable obstacle to Ramabai's continuing relationship with Anglicanism and indeed with any orthodox Christian sect. She believed Christianity to be superior to Brahmoism and infinitely superior to popular Hinduism, but its miraculous elements, including the Incarnation and the Resurrection, appeared to be little more than superstition.

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48 Ibid, p 390.
50 Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, 30th June, Letters and Correspondence, p 127-128; Ramabai's letter to Dr Pentecost, Christian Patriot, week following 26th December 1892, Donore Scrapbook, pp 6-7.
51 Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, October 12, 1885; 31st May 1885; November 29 1885, Letters and Correspondence, pp 141, 154-155, 159-160.
Geraldine expressed her concern to Charles Gore that Ramabai was drifting into "a diluted Christianity" due to the influence of the Brahma Samaj.  

Charles Gore

Dorothea Beale had attempted to explain the nature of Christ's divinity to Ramabai using traditional Christology, along with a flurry of popular analogies to describe the interrelationship of the three persons of the Trinity. After recommending Ramabai to read Liddon's Bampton Lectures, Dorothea Beale sought the assistance of the Reverend Charles Gore.  

In 1885 Charles Gore was the Librarian of Pusey House and examining chaplain to the Bishop of Lincoln. He was also perhaps the most prominent member of the Holy Party, a group of second generation tractarians, who were attempting to reconcile the insights of modern science and biblical criticism with traditional theology. In 1889 Gore edited a collection of essays entitled Lux Mundi for which he was castigated by older tractarians such as Liddon. Lux Mundi and particularly Gore's Essay, "The Holy Spirit and Inspiration" caused great offence for its suggestion that Christ's knowledge was limited and perhaps at times in error. Apart from the publication of Lux Mundi, Gore is remembered for his foundation of the Community of the Resurrection in 1892 and for his application of the doctrine of the Incarnation to the continuing work of the Church. Most importantly he was associated with the development of a Kenotic Christology which had considerable impact upon Anglicanism for more

52 Sister Geraldine to Reverend Charles Gore, (undated) 1885, Letters and Correspondence p 82.
53 Dorothea Beale to Ramabai, April 1885; Ramabai to Dorothea Beale June 30, 1885, Letters and Correspondence pp 120-123, 129.
54 Dorothea Beale to Sister Geraldine, April 1885, Letters and Correspondence p 39; Charles Gore to Dorothea Beale, 14th April 1885, Beale Correspondence.
55 Crockford's Clerical Directory 1892.
56 Carpenter, Gore pp 33-35.
57 Carpenter, Gore pp 35-36; Chadwick, The Victorian Church Part Two p 101.
59 Carpenter, Gore, pp 34-36, 221-222.
than a generation.\textsuperscript{60}

The primary objective of Gore's christology was to recover the humanity of Jesus at a time when tractarians particularly appeared to over-emphasize his divinity.\textsuperscript{61} To achieve this, Gore developed a Christology which attempted to explain how Christ could be truly man, existing under the common limitations of finitude, and yet at the same time remain God.\textsuperscript{62} Gore's Kenosis theory was initially published in his work, \textit{Dissertations on Subjects Connected with the Incarnation}, in 1895.\textsuperscript{63} But he had previously presented an outline of his theory to Ramabai through his letters and conversations with her in 1885.

Ramabai's basic problem with the Incarnation, which Gore deduced, was how could God become a man and still be God?\textsuperscript{64} In his conversations with Ramabai, Gore attempted to answer that question by his theory of Kenosis based on the biblical verses, Philippians 2:11; 2 Corinthians 8:9.\textsuperscript{65} Gore's kenotic theory essentially argued that Christ as the Second Person of the Trinity had limited his powers of omniscience and omnipresence by an act of divine will in order to fully enter into the human experience.\textsuperscript{66} Whilst Gore emphasized the humanity of Jesus he did not do so at the cost of affirming his equality with the Godhead. Thus he maintained that although Christ had laid aside his divine mode of existence he still continued to exercise some cosmic functions during his

\textsuperscript{60} Ibid, pp 146-147.
\textsuperscript{61} Ibid, pp 157-159. See also D. M. Baillie, \textit{God Was in Christ}: An Essay on Incarnation and Atonement, Faber and Faber, London 1948, pp 12,14.
\textsuperscript{62} Carpenter, op.cit., pp 159-166.
\textsuperscript{63} Ibid, pp 159-166, 271.
\textsuperscript{64} Gore to Beale, April 14, 1885, \textit{Beale Correspondence}.
\textsuperscript{65} Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, June 30, 1885 \textit{Letters and Correspondence}, p 127; Charles Gore to Dorothea Beale, April 14, 1885, \textit{Beale Correspondence}. For the scriptural basis of Kenosis see, Carpenter, op.cit., pp 161-162.
\textsuperscript{66} Carpenter, op.cit., p 163; Charles Gore to Dorothea Beale, April 14, 1885, \textit{Beale Correspondence}; Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, June 30, 1885, \textit{Letters and Correspondence} pp 127-128.
incarnation. Using traditional christological passages from the Old and New Testament he first sought to establish the divinity of Christ to Ramabai’s satisfaction and secondly to reconcile the problem of the relationship of the divine attributes, specifically omniscience and omnipotence, to the human nature of Jesus Christ.

Ramabai analysed Gore’s biblical references for the divinity of Christ and rejected each argument on interpretive grounds. But whilst Gore did not allay her fears of polytheism his emphasis on the humanity of Christ was perhaps far more repellent to her, given her Vaishnava background. She wrote in reference to Gore’s claim that Acts 20:28 established the divinity of Christ that,

"...we shall then be driven to acknowledge that God has blood in his veins as we have it, and that "He was crucified, dead and buried. Can we reconcile this sort of language - which if applied to Almighty God is blasphemous - with the notion of God as Spirit as it is revealed in the Scriptures?"

As has been stated, one of the major obstacles standing in the way of Ramabai’s acceptance of the doctrine of the Incarnation was precisely the difficulty of reconciling the divine qualities of omniscience, omnipotence and impassibility with the historical Jesus, not least with his suffering and death. Although the Council of Chalcedon preserved the impassibility and immutability of the divine nature in Christ by maintaining the doctrine of the two natures in the form of paradoxical common preaching, piety and hymnody did not always make such

67 Carpenter, op.cit., p 163.
68 Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, "Summer" 1885; June 30th 1885, Letters and Correspondence, pp 149-150, 127-128.
69 Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, "Summer" 1885, Letters and Correspondence pp 149-150.
70 Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, 30th June 1885; Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, "Summer" 1885; Dorothea Beale to an unknown Correspondent, November 30, 1885, Letters and Correspondence pp 127-128, 146, 161.
71 Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, "Summer" 1885, Letters and Correspondence, p 146.
72 Charles Gore to Dorothea Beale, April 14, 1885, Beale Correspondence.
sophisticated distinctions as such issues were no longer of paramount concern to most Christians.\textsuperscript{73} The second verse of the well-known hymn, "When I survey the wondrous cross" for example makes no concession to christological distinctions. It simply states,

> "Forbid it Lord, that I should boast
> Save in the death of Christ my God;
> All the vain things that charm me most,
> I sacrifice them to his blood." (Isaac Watts 1674-1748.)

This was the Christianity to which Ramabai had been exposed through the ministries of Isaac Allen, Miss Hurford and the CSMV. As with Hinduism there were sophisticated levels of philosophical thought and enquiry within Christianity which held little interest for the majority of the faithful. Esoteric dogmas such as the dual nature of Christ might exercise the minds of theologians but their flocks by and large accepted such mysteries by faith, saving their reason for more mundane issues. But Ramabai had not been born a Christian, she was a convert. Moreover she was one who had been exposed to similar myths from childhood but had repudiated them as idolatry. Most importantly, her experience within the Brahmo Samaj had led her to believe that any faith worth espousing must be reasonable. Its dogmas must convince.

Gore’s theology only served to highlight Ramabai’s difficulties with Christology. It did nothing to allay them.\textsuperscript{74} Whilst he regarded the problem of the relationship between the divine attributes and the human Jesus as basically a logistic one, Ramabai’s theological context was essentially Dvaita Vedanta. She had been taught that omniscience and omnipotence were of the essence of God and could not be laid aside without God ceasing to be God.\textsuperscript{75} Gore’s central thesis was therefore incapable of addressing Ramabai’s basic concerns. Having emerged from Hinduism into the rationalism of the Brahmo Samaj she was

\textsuperscript{73} Berkof, \textit{The History of Christian Doctrines} pp 106-108.
\textsuperscript{74} Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, "Summer" 1885; Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, September 1, 1885, \textit{Letters and Correspondence} pp 143, 136-138.
\textsuperscript{75} Sharma, op.cit., pp 329-330.
suspicious about any teaching which smacked of polytheism. As we have seen the doctrine of the Incarnation filled her with repugnance because it appeared to compromise the purity of God by reducing the Supreme Being to the level of man. Another concern was that the Incarnation unacceptably narrowed if not obliterated the essential difference between God and Man which was central to Dvaita Vedanta. 76 Gore’s thesis only served to raise more questions in Ramabai’s mind. He left her wondering how Christians could condemn Hindu avatarism when the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation defiled the divine nature by its association with gross matter on the one hand, whilst his Christology appeared to ultimately destroy the very essence of God on the other.

Nehemiah Goreh

Nehemiah Goreh continued corresponding with Ramabai during her residency in England and would therefore have been aware of her difficulties with the deity of Christ. 78 In 1887 Goreh published, Proofs of the Divinity of Our Lord, particularly with Ramabai in mind. 79 In that work he took up many of Ramabai’s objections to the divinity of Christ, discussing at length both the Trinity and the Athanasian Creed. Unfortunately Goreh’s correspondence with Ramabai prior to the publication of Proofs has not survived. Therefore there is insufficient evidence upon which to judge Goreh’s influence on this issue during the period in question. Whilst Ramabai later accepted the tenets of orthodox Christianity, it was, as we shall see, a faith decision in the light of her conversion to Holiness theology.

76 Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, ”Summer” 1885, Letters and Correspondence p 146.
77 Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, June 30th 1885, Letters and Correspondence pp 127-128.
78 Ramabai to Geraldine, October 1884; Butler to Dorothea Beale, July 5, 1885. Letters and Correspondence pp 27-28, 76-77.
79 Adhav, Pandita Ramabai p 117
Ramabai’s Creed

On June 21st 1885, Ramabai wrote to Dorothea Beale outlining a statement of her beliefs. She referred to it as her Articles of Faith. These Articles reflected her religious beliefs not only for the remaining months of her residency in England but until her second Christian conversion. They are interesting not only for what is stated but perhaps more so for what has been omitted.

Ramabai maintained that all her Articles could be substantiated by the teachings of Christ in the New Testament. Nor was she prepared to accept any doctrine which was not directly attributable to Christ, or which could not be demonstrated to be in accordance with his teaching.²⁰ Having established the above as her principle Ramabai added that her Articles represented the minimum statement of belief required for salvation.²¹ In her Articles Ramabai stated the following:

(1) Her belief in one God and her intention to love and obey "Him".
(2) Her duty towards her neighbour.
(3) That Jesus was Messiah, Redeemer, Judge, Heavenly King, Mediator and "Son of God."
(4) The necessity of baptism in the three-fold Name. (a) because it was commanded by Christ and (b) as a public declaration of allegiance to the Christian religion.
(5) that the eucharist ought to be celebrated as a "perpetual remembrance" of Christ’s death and to maintain "the brotherly spirit between my fellow-Christians."
(6) To serve God by good works.
(7) To persevere in the struggle against sin.

Absent from Ramabai’s Creed was any statement of the Trinity, the deity of Christ and the Incarnation. She was, however, aware that by consenting

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²⁰ Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, June 21st 1885, Letters and Correspondence pp 157–158.
²¹ Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, June 21st 1885, Letters and Correspondence p 158.
to baptism in the Trinity she was acknowledging an inconsistency in her position. Absent also was any belief in the bodily Resurrection of Christ or in the general resurrection of faithful. Her position on these issues was very much in keeping with the Brahmo Samaj which subscribed to the doctrine of the immortality of souls but not to a doctrine of bodily resurrection.

Further analysis of Ramabai’s Articles of Faith also revealed a total rejection of tractarian culture. Firstly, her Article of Faith regarding the Holy Communion described the rite only in terms of a perpetual remembrance and a shared communal experience. There were no statements concerning the eucharist as a sacramental feast or as a rite of spiritual communion or even as an experience of grace. Yet these were interpretations of the rite which were fundamental to both Dorothea Beale and Sister Geraldine. Nor was there any reference by Ramabai to the doctrine of the Real Presence which lay at the heart of tractarian eucharistic theology. Rather, Ramabai’s understanding of the eucharist was closer in its ethos to the Baptist tradition than Anglicanism.

Secondly, Ramabai made no mention of obedience to the Church or acknowledgement of its authority. In fact she repudiated Catholic authority by her rejection of the Athanasian Creed. The Bible, specifically the commands and the teachings of Christ and her own conscience were the only authorities she was prepared to entertain. Her Articles of Faith further demonstrated her rejection of other aspects of tractarian culture. There were no references for

82 Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, June 21, 1885, Letters and Correspondence p 158.
83 Sastri, The Mission of the Brahmo Samaj pp 19-21; Ramabai to Dorothea Beale November 29, 1885; Ramabai to Sister Geraldine, April 20, 1886, Letters and Correspondence p 160, 212.
84 Sister Geraldine to Ramabai Oct 5, 1885; Dorothea Beale to Pandita Ramabai, April 1885, Letters and Correspondence pp 96, 122.
85 Geraldine to Ramabai, Oct 5, 1885, Letters and Correspondence p 96.
86 Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, June 21st 1885, Letters and Correspondence p 157-158.
example to confession or confirmation. Nor was there any statement by her that she was a member of the Anglican Community. Instead she described her baptism as simply an act of obedience to a command of Christ and as a public declaration of her change of religious allegiance. There was no mention by her of baptism as a rite of initiation into the Church of England. Nor did she describe her baptism as a sacramental cleansing from sin or as a sign of regeneration. Rather, Ramabai’s Articles stripped both the eucharist and baptism of their sacramental power as envisaged by Anglicanism, thereby reducing both to the barest essentials. Finally, her choice of name for her statement of faith, that is "Articles of Faith", suggests that she was providing Dorothea with her alternative to the Church of England’s Articles of Religion. Therefore, by repudiating all authority except for the Bible and her own conscience, Ramabai dismissed much of what was so dear to tractarian culture.

Ramabai claimed the Articles as a minimalist statement of faith for salvation. Their intention was undoubtedly to justify her conversion to Christianity in the light of her rejection of such fundamental beliefs as the divinity of Christ. The Articles, however, revealed her complete lack of confidence in central doctrines of the Anglican Church as well as her rejection of tractarian authority and culture. Her confidence in the CSMV over the previous twelve months or more had been eroded due to the influence of a number of sources. As we have seen, the Brahmo Samaj Movement had a significant influence on the Trinitarian Controversy. Isaac Allen and Richard Glover were likewise influential in the Sanskrit Debate. These sources, with the addition of Mrs Gilmore, were instrumental in shaping Ramabai’s religious opinions during this period and their antipathy towards high-church Anglicanism undoubtedly undermined her confidence in the Wantage Community.

A further significant contributor to Ramabai’s lack of confidence in

87 Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, June 21st, Letters and Correspondence pp 157-158.
the Anglican Church was the CSMV itself. The Trinitarian Controversy and the Sanskrit Debate were both regarded by the Community as challenges to the Church's authority.88 Consequently both Sister Geraldine and Canon Butler adopted a confrontationalist approach. They required Ramabai to dispense with doubt, to believe and obey.89 The adoption of this policy, along with Sister Geraldine's personal criticisms of Ramabai's lack of maternal instincts, will be demonstrated in the following chapter to have contributed to a further erosion of Ramabai's relationship with the CSMV. 90

88 Sister Geraldine to the Lord Bishop (undated) Letters and Correspondence p 29.
89 Sister Geraldine to the Lord Bishop, (undated) Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, August 15, 1885, Letters and Correspondence pp 29, 131-134.
90 On Geraldine's criticisms of Ramabai's parental role, see Letters and Correspondence pp 315-316.
Chapter 9: The Break with Anglicanism

The Sanskrit Debate and the Trinitarian Controversy convinced Sister Geraldine that Dorothea Beale had failed to exercise sufficient discipline and authority over Ramabai.\(^1\) Mrs Poole had informed Sister Geraldine that Ramabai’s religious life had deteriorated during her residency at Cheltenham.\(^2\) She attributed much of the decline to Dorothea Beale’s liberality inferring that Dorothea allowed Ramabai too much independence and freedom of movement.\(^3\)

The Sanskrit Debate had revealed to Geraldine something of the extent of Ramabai’s contacts with people blatantly opposed to high church teachings.\(^4\) Ramabai’s association with such people deeply concerned Geraldine throughout 1885, chiefly because she believed that Ramabai was susceptible to flattery and easily influenced.\(^5\) While she knew of Ramabai’s contact with Mrs Oilmore, the visit to the Grovers at Bristol and the resumption of Ramabai’s relationship with Isaac Allen seriously concerned her. It is a fair assumption that correspondence between Ramabai and the Bristol Baptists had preceded the former’s arrival in England and had continued throughout this period. Certainly Richard Glover knew where to contact Ramabai to inform her of Isaac Allen’s arrival at Bristol in May 1885. In her letter to Geraldine describing the Bristol visit, Ramabai verified that Richard Glover was no stranger to her.\(^6\)

Whether Geraldine’s references to the hordes of Nonconformists which plagued Ramabai at this time was an exaggerated reference to the

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1 Sister Geraldine to the Lord Bishop, 1885, (undated); Sister Geraldine to the Dean of Lincoln, July 1, 1885, Letters and Correspondence, pp 29, 71-72.
2 Mrs Poole to Geraldine, June, 1885, Letters and Correspondence pp 63-64.
3 Poole to Geraldine, June, 1885, Letters and Correspondence pp 63-64.
4 Dorothea Beale to Sister Geraldine, June 16, 1885, Sister Geraldine to the Lord Bishop, (undated) Letters and Correspondence pp 62-63, 29
5 Sister Geraldine, Letters and Correspondence pp 300, 406-407
6 Ramabai to Geraldine, May 12, 1885, Letters and Correspondence, p 58.
Baptists or included others as well is not known.⁷ She did however note that many non-Anglicans were in regular touch with Ramabai during this period, furnishing her with arguments against the high church and giving the Community grave cause for concern.⁸ And having noticed a distinct change in Ramabai's demeanour following her fortnight with Mrs Gilmore, she was similarly worried about further contact in that direction.⁹ As we noted Dorothea was prepared to dismiss the influence of Mrs Gilmore as negligible but Geraldine was not. Nor was Geraldine successful in severing the relationship between Ramabai and Mrs Gilmore as Manoramabai subsequently revealed.¹⁰

In a letter to Ramabai Ranade in 1884, Ramabai referred to denominational differences amongst Christians and confessed that she was both confused and confounded by them.¹¹ Significantly she wrote,

"Everyone of them (i.e denominations) tries to drag you into their fold resulting in a sort of rivalry amongst them."¹²

In order to resolve the conflict in her own mind concerning the truth claims of the competing denominations in her life, that is the Baptists and the Anglicans (high church and evangelical), Ramabai resolved to give her allegiance to none. Instead as early as 1884 after having described herself to Ramabai Ranade as "utterly lost" in denominational differences, she repudiated affiliation with any and all denominations, declaring herself to be a member only of the universal church of Christ.¹³ Whilst that declaration did little to ease her confusion, it did provide her with an intellectual place of refuge when she felt

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⁷ Sister Geraldine, *Letters and Correspondence*, p 400.
⁸ Ibid, p 406.
¹² Ibid
most threatened. 14

Ramabai’s deafness was also an important factor in her communication with people. Often she was unable to follow a sermon or an address unless arrangements had previously been made to place her in close proximity to the speaker. 15 Correspondence therefore became an important medium of communication for Ramabai and as her hearing deteriorated she became more reliant upon it. 16 For this reason towards the end of 1885 when matters between Ramabai and the CSMV were particularly strained, Geraldine wanted to monitor Ramabai’s letters to ascertain the extent of their influence and also to be forewarned against any criticisms which may have been levelled at Wantage. 17

Although at times Geraldine seemed obsessed at the thought of Nonconformists purloining Ramabai, the Sanksrit Debate had demonstrated that her concerns were not without foundation. Whilst Dorothea was also aware of Geraldine’s anxiety her attitude to the situation was very different. Dorothea believed it was useless to protect Ramabai from conflicting viewpoints and indeed Charles Gore agreed. 18 Geraldine disagreed. She wanted Ramabai to be grounded in the Catholic Faith before she was exposed to other points of view. 19

In the aftermath of the Sanksrit Debate and with the Trinitarian Controversy brewing, Geraldine proposed to remove Ramabai from the more

14 Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, "St Hilda’s Sunday" Letters and Correspondence p 151.
15 Dorothea Beale to Canon Butler, July; Ramabai to Sister Geraldine, 12th July 1885; Ramabai to Dorothea Beale July 28, 1885, Letters and Correspondence pp 78, 80, 130–131.
16 Ramabai to Geraldine July 12, 1885, Letters and Correspondence p 80.
17 Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, St Hilda’s Sunday, Letters and Correspondence p 153.
18 Dorothea Beale to Sister Geraldine, June 16, 1885; Charles Gore, July 5, 1885, Letters and Correspondence pp 63, 84.
19 Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, St Hilda’s Sunday; Geraldine to Ramabai, Oct 5, 1885, Letters and Correspondence pp 152–153, 92.
liberal atmosphere of The Cheltenham Ladies' College and have her complete her training as a teacher under the auspices of the Wantage National Schools programme.20 She confided both to Canon Butler and to Charles Gore her belief that Dorothea Beale was "mismanaging Ramabai".21 Dorothea’s offer to supplement Ramabai’s income in order to make her financially independent of the CSMV was not welcomed by Sister Geraldine.22 Rather the offer appeared to Sister Geraldine to be nothing less than an incentive to Ramabai to consolidate her independence from the Community.23 It confirmed to Geraldine that Dorothea Beale was no longer suitable as a chaperone for Ramabai.24 Although Geraldine primarily disapproved of Dorothea Beale’s laxity with Ramabai I suspect she was aware that her own influence was waning as Ramabai turned more often to Dorothea for advice. Geraldine hoped that with Ramabai at Wantage the latter would be once again under the influence and control of the Community with the likelihood of her faith restored.25

There was a certain degree of confusion, not to mention the possibility of rivalry between Geraldine’s attempts to persuade Ramabai to leave Cheltenham at the end of the academic year and Dorothea Beale’s efforts to retain her as a student. There were disagreements between Geraldine and Dorothea over whether the initial arrangement for Ramabai at Cheltenham was

20 Geraldine to Ramabai May 25, 1885; Dorothea Beale to Sister Geraldine, June 16, 1885; Ramabai to Sister Geraldine, June 1885; Geraldine to Ramabai, June 25, 1885 Letters and Correspondence pp 65, 62, 70, 65.
21 Geraldine to the Dean of Lincoln, July 1, 1885; Geraldine to Charles Gore, July 3, 1885, Letters and Correspondence pp 71-72, 84.
22 Sister Geraldine to the Dean of Lincoln, July 1, 1885, Letters and Correspondence pp 71.
23 Sister Geraldine to the Dean of Lincoln, July 1, 1885, Letters and Correspondence pp 71-72.
24 Sister Geraldine to the Dean of Lincoln, July 1, 1885, Letters and Correspondence pp 71-72.
25 Geraldine to Ramabai, June 21, 1885; Geraldine to Ramabai, July 3, 1885 Letters and Correspondence pp 64-65, 63.
for one year or two. 26 Geraldine accused Dorothea of reneging on the agreed one year, a charge which Dorothea subsequently disputed.27

During Geraldine’s negotiations for her return to Wantage, Ramabai was further alienated from the Community by Geraldine’s criticism of her as a mother. 28 Geraldine was of the opinion that Ramabai was lacking in maternal instincts as she often placed her own ambitions before that of her child’s needs.29 Accordingly, Geraldine sought to persuade Ramabai of the need to improve her behaviour towards Manoramabai by striving for perfection as a Christian mother.30 Needless to say Ramabai was deeply affronted by such advice and it strengthened her resolve to resist Geraldine’s intentions to remove her from Cheltenham.31

The situation between Ramabai and the CSMV deteriorated further in late June. Geraldine had allowed Ramabai to assume that Dorothea was not willing to have her at Cheltenham for another year. Ramabai received a written reply from Dorothea to the contrary which she forwarded to Geraldine. But Dorothea’s letter convinced her that she was being deliberately misled.32 In her letter to Geraldine of the 25th June, Ramabai’s anger was unrestrained. She referred to CSMV disapproval of her failure to attend confession and to Canon Butler’s reputed comment that she was being influenced by the devil.33 She also

26 Geraldine to Ramabai June 21, 1885; Geraldine to Charles Gore (undated) 1885, Letters and Correspondence. pp. 65-62.
27 Dorothea Beale to Ramabai, June 24, 1885; Geraldine to Canon Butler, July 1, Letters and Correspondence. pp 67,72.
28 Geraldine to Ramabai, June 21, 1885; Ramabai to Geraldine, June 24, 1885, Letters and Correspondence pp 64,66.
29 Letters and Correspondence pp 7-8, 315-317.
30 Geraldine to Ramabai, June 21, 1885, Letters and Correspondence. pp 64-65.
31 Ramabai to Geraldine, June 24, 1885, Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, June 1885, Letters and Correspondence. pp 66, 127.
32 Ramabai to Sister Geraldine, June 25, 1885, Letters and Correspondence. p 68; Ramabai to Geraldine, June 24, 1885, Letters and Correspondence. pp 67-68.
In Geraldine’s defence see Dorothea Beale’s letter to Sister Geraldine, April 22, 1885, Letters and Correspondence. p 32.
complained of the interference of the CSMV in her life. This was an issue which had been raised during the Sanskrit Debate but which had never been settled. It continued to be a matter of contention between Ramabai and the Community. In conclusion, Ramabai informed Geraldine that all matters pertaining to her future would be decided during the summer holidays of 1885, including whether or not she would undertake a second year at Cheltenham.

The Summer of 1885

Ramabai's relationship with the CSMV deteriorated further during the summer of 1885. In July Ramabai had an emotional interview with Canon Butler in which she stated her views regarding the divinity of Christ, declaring that she had the right to her own opinion. As we have seen Canon Butler was not a man who accepted lightly threats to his own authority and he advised Ramabai not to approach him again unless she was prepared to follow his advice. Following the interview Ramabai wrote to Butler on two occasions informing him of her determination only to accept Anglican doctrine which could be proved by the Bible. Interestingly this was not a condition to which she adhered herself. In respect to the biblical miracles, Ramabai flatly refused to believe them. Therefore it might be more correct to state that she demanded from the CSMV proof that its teachings were in accordance with her understanding of the Bible.

During the Summer the CSMV attempted to regain its authority over Ramabai by persuading her to remain at Wantage after the holidays. However

33 Ramabai to Sister Geraldine, June 25, Letters and Correspondence, p 68
34 Ramabai to Sister Geraldine, June 25, 1885, Letters and Correspondence, pp 67-68.
35 Ramabai to Sister Geraldine, June 25, 1885, Letters and Correspondence pp 67-68.
36 Ramabai to Canon Butler, July 3, 1885, Letters and Correspondence pp 74.
37 Ramabai to Canon Butler, July 3, 1885, Letters and Correspondence pp 75.
38 Ramabai to Canon Butler, July 3, 1885, July (undated) 1885, Letters and Correspondence, pp 76,80.
39 Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, May 31st 1885, Letters and Correspondence, pp 154-156.
Dorothea Beale convinced Canon Butler and Geraldine to permit Ramabai to make her own decisions, volunteering her own time as confidante to her should she return to Cheltenham.\textsuperscript{40} Dorothea was convinced that her own experience of spiritual doubt had uniquely prepared her to minister to Ramabai. In fact she inferred that her discussions with Ramabai had made her own experiences meaningful.\textsuperscript{41} However during this period Charles Gore was discussing the Trinity with Ramabai and the full extent of her unbelief in this and other related doctrines was only beginning to dawn upon the CSMV.\textsuperscript{42}

In August a low point was reached in the relationship between Butler and Ramabai. During an interview at Wantage Butler accused Ramabai of arrogance because she, a neophyte, was presuming to teach him.\textsuperscript{43} He informed her that all communication between them was suspended until she changed her attitude.\textsuperscript{44} Butler’s frustration was evident. In an atmosphere charged with emotion he dismissed Ramabai from his office.\textsuperscript{45} In describing the incident to Dorothea, Ramabai wrote,

"There was something (...?) a very contemptuous expression (on his face) when he said, "Go and work or stay with the Brahmos, or do what you like," etc., and that he was very sorry I was denying Christ, and that he had hoped a great deal of me, and that now all was over, etc."\textsuperscript{46}

The relationship had been irrevocably strained. In fact Ramabai found

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\textsuperscript{40} Dorothea Beale to Canon Butler July 1885, \textit{Letters and Correspondence}, pp 77-79.
\textsuperscript{41} Dorothea to Sister Geraldine, June 16, 1885, \textit{Letters and Correspondence} p 63.
\textsuperscript{42} Ramabai to Sister Geraldine, June 25, 1885, \textit{Letters and Correspondence} pp 67-69.
\textsuperscript{43} Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, August 15, 1885, \textit{Letters and Correspondence} pp 131-132.
\textsuperscript{44} Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, August 15, 1885, \textit{Letters and Correspondence} p 131.
\textsuperscript{45} Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, August 15, 1885, \textit{Letters and Correspondence} p 132.
\textsuperscript{46} Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, August 15, 1885, \textit{Letters and Correspondence} p 132. NB. The brackets indicate that some words had proved illegible to the editor.
the atmosphere at Wantage very tense over the summer.\textsuperscript{47} So much so she decided to return to Cheltenham before the commencement of the academic year to avoid any further deterioration of her relationship with Butler.\textsuperscript{48} But the damage had been done and communication between Butler and Ramabai was never restored.

**The Athanasian Creed**

The Athanasian Creed became a bone of contention between Ramabai and Geraldine for the remaining months of 1885. Its affirmation of the Trinity and its anathema against non-Trinitarians was deeply resented by Ramabai.\textsuperscript{49} So too was its proclamation that the Catholic Faith was the only true Faith. Although Ramabai interpreted the word "Catholic" in a universal sense, she was only too aware that Geraldine regarded the term as applicable only to the three branches of the Catholic tradition.\textsuperscript{50} Nor was Ramabai alone in her reservations concerning the Creed. It had come in for a great deal of criticism in 1872.\textsuperscript{51} Broad churchmen opposed it not only for its anathema against non-subscribers to the Creed but because they regarded it as perpetuating sectarian differences.\textsuperscript{52} But the tractarians under the leadership of Pusey and Liddon mounted a successful campaign to forestall any attack upon the authority of the Creed or any demise of its public usage.\textsuperscript{53} Its patristic origins, its orthodoxy and its catholicity more than commended it to them.

\textsuperscript{47} Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, "Summer vacation" 1885, *Letters and Correspondence*, pp 134-135.
\textsuperscript{48} Dorothea Beale to Sister Geraldine, August 27, 1885, *Letters and Correspondence*, p 35.
\textsuperscript{49} Ramabai to Geraldine, September 22, 1885; Geraldine to Ramabai, Bath, October 1885, *Letters and Correspondence*, pp 89-90, 102-106.
\textsuperscript{50} Ramabai to Sister Geraldine, November 7, 1885, *Letters and Correspondence* p 112.
\textsuperscript{51} Stock, *History of the C.M.S.* Vol 3, 1899, p 4; Chadwick, *The Victorian Church* Part Two p 150.
\textsuperscript{53} Stock, op.cit., p 4; Chadwick, *The Victorian Church* Part Two p 150.
During that summer at Wantage, Ramabai requested Geraldine not to teach Manoramabai any doctrine which affirmed the deity of Christ.\textsuperscript{54} The discovery of Manoramabai making the sign of the cross before she said her evening prayers convinced Ramabai that the CSMV was indoctrinating her daughter into Trinitarianism.\textsuperscript{55} In an effort to counteract the Community’s influence, Ramabai crossed out all references to the deity of Christ in Mano’s Prayer Book and Hymnal, an act which greatly distressed the elderly Miss Noble to whom the books belonged.\textsuperscript{56}

Ramabai’s accusation that the CSMV was teaching the Athanasian Creed to Mano was refuted by Geraldine.\textsuperscript{57} As Geraldine explained, Mano’s age and level of understanding rendered anything more than the most rudimentary religious knowledge inapplicable and she attributed Ramabai’s actions to a misunderstanding.\textsuperscript{58} It was clear however from Ramabai’s letter to Dorothea Beale of the 21st September 1885, that she regarded the Athanasian Creed as a synonym for the doctrine of the Trinity. Any act or reference to Christ as God was subsequently attributed by Ramabai to the teaching of the Athanasian Creed. This included such acts as making the sign of the cross or referring in anyway to Christ as God by hymn or prayer.\textsuperscript{59}

An additional complication to Geraldine and Ramabai’s dispute over Manoramabai’s religious education was Ramabai’s undoubted concerns about

\textsuperscript{54} Ramabai to Sister Geraldine, September 20, 1885, Letters and Correspondence pp 86-87.
\textsuperscript{55} Ramabai to Sister Geraldine, September 20, 1885, Letters and Correspondence pp 85-86.
\textsuperscript{56} Ramabai to Sister Geraldine, September 20, 1885; Ramabai to Miss Noble, July 6, 1886, Letters and Correspondence p 87,196.
\textsuperscript{57} Sister Geraldine, Letters and Correspondence pp 4-5.
\textsuperscript{58} Sister Geraldine, Letters and Correspondence pp 4-5; Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, September 21 1885, Letters and Correspondence p 140.
\textsuperscript{59} Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, September 21, 1885, Letters and Correspondence p 140.
Geraldine’s influence over Mano and the bond which had formed between them in her absence. Manoramabai was often separated from Ramabai for weeks at a time and naturally she turned to Geraldine as a mother substitute with the result that she tended to place Geraldine’s authority above that of her mother’s, which Ramabai resented.

Ramabai’s request to the Community not to teach or allow Mano to participate in any act of worship which acknowledged Christ or the Holy Spirit as God was an affront to its religious beliefs. It was asking the Community not just to compromise its faith but to deny it. However, it was a letter written in the context of anger and Ramabai later acknowledged that she was not surprised at Geraldine’s refusal. But apart from demonstrating her anger, the request revealed Ramabai’s ignorance of the religious culture of the CSMV. It was also odd in light of her advocacy of the seriousness of religious beliefs and her own fear of compromise. In her letter to Canon Butler of July, 1885 she had written:

“I could perhaps, my dear father in Christ, agree with or obey you in other matters, but religion is such an awful matter that both parties are responsible for what they say or prove.....If we are on the wrong way and make another poor brother of ours agree with us, we shall be guilty of leading him in a wrong way and must answer for it before the awful seat of judgement on the Last Day.”

Her request refused, Ramabai decided to return to Wantage to undertake the supervision of Manoramabai’s religious education herself, pending

60 Miss Noble to Sister Geraldine, February 18, 1885; March 18, 1886, no 1, Notebooks of Geraldine.
61 Ramabai to Sister Geraldine, September 20, 1885, Letters and Correspondence, pp 85-86.
62 Ramabai to Sister Geraldine, September 20 1885, Letters and Correspondence, pp 85-87.
63 Ramabai to Sister Geraldine, September 22, Letters and Correspondence, 1885 p 88.
64 Ramabai to Sister Geraldine, September 22, 1885; Sister Geraldine to Dorothea Beale, January 1886, Letters and Correspondence pp 87-88, 114.
65 Ramabai to Canon Butler, July 1885, Letters and Correspondence pp 79-80.
arrangements for a return to India. 66 Ramabai of course, had been stung by Geraldine's accusations of her inadequacies as a mother and her return to Wantage was an attempt to regain her authority over her daughter as well as to prove to Geraldine that she took her parental responsibilities seriously. 67

Geraldine received a second request from Ramabai, one which she described as "most curious". 68 Ramabai believed she was ill prepared to return to India and she asked Geraldine to prepare her by discipline and training to found "a sort of Sisterhood". 69 Whilst Ramabai's request concerning Mano could be explained as a moment of anger, her suggestion that Geraldine train her to establish a sisterhood in light of her rejection of the Community's faith, revealed a fundamental inability on her part to communicate with the Community and to sympathise with its culture. Both requests, even when allowances are made, suggest that Ramabai not only lacked sympathy with the Community, she lacked a fundamental understanding of it.

Having said that, in the latter months of 1885 her references to "a sort of Sisterhood" like her references to a "teaching order" were simply synonyms for the establishment of a female educational facility. As she had shown with her references to the Athanasian Creed, Ramabai was not precise in her use of Catholic terms and undoubtedly she was often misunderstood by the Community. Although she originally envisaged the foundation of a religious order, it is doubtful at this stage, given her estrangement from the Community and her continuing struggle with Anglican doctrine and authority, that she was still

66 Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, September 21, 1885; Ramabai to Sister Geraldine, September 22, 1885; Geraldine to Dorothea Beale, January, 1886, Letters and Correspondence, pp 140, 69-90, 114.
67 Ramabai to Geraldine, September 20 1885; Ramabai to Dorothea September 21, 1886, Letters and Correspondence pp 95-97, 140.
68 Geraldine to Dorothea Beale, January 1886, Letters and Correspondence p 114.
69 Ramabai to Geraldine, September 22, 1885; Geraldine to Dorothea Beale January 1886, Letters and Correspondence pp 90, 114.
seriously entertaining that idea. It may well be that she had in mind the foundation of an educational facility whose staff would voluntarily adopt the ethos of a religious order, that is, undertake the traditional vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, in order to dedicate their lives to teaching. This had been a long standing ambition of Dorothea Beale, which may add another dimension to her efforts to retain Ramabai at Cheltenham. But if Ramabai had such an idea in mind, it was not one she shared with Geraldine who was clearly confused. She also made it clear to Geraldine that if she returned to Wantage the Community would have to accept without any further argument that she totally rejected the Athanasian Creed. It was an unmistakable message to the Community of her inability to partake with any sincerity in its religious life. At the same time Ramabai was fully expecting Geraldine to train her to found a community, the religious basis of which appeared to have more in common with the Brahmo Samaj than with the CSMV. As Geraldine later confided to Dorothea Beale, both Ramabai’s requests had astonished her.

October 5, 1885.

Geraldine’s letter of October 5, 1885 is important for its documentation of the issues dividing the CSMV and Ramabai. Ramabai’s requests had served to convince Geraldine how inadequate her grasp had been of beliefs central to the life of the Community. Most importantly she began to wonder if Ramabai’s conversion had been genuine.

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70 Raikes, *Dorothea Beale of Cheltenham* pp 249-250. In August 1885 Ramabai wrote to Dorothea that they would discuss such a possibility following her return to Cheltenham. See Ramabai’s letter to Dorothea, 15th August 1885, *Beale Correspondence*.
71 Ramabai to Geraldine, September 22, 1885, *Letters and Correspondence* p 90.
72 Ramabai to Geraldine, September 22 1885, *Letters and Correspondence* p 90.
73 Sister Geraldine to Dorothea Beale, January 1886, *Letters and Correspondence* p 114.
Geraldine identified Ramabai's spiritual malaise as essentially one of rebellion against authority. It was her opinion that if Ramabai accepted the authority and teaching of the Anglican Church, she might regain her faith. But in order to persuade her to submit herself to the authority and discipline of the Church Geraldine had to counteract the influence of the Brahma Samaj. Ramabai's training in the Samaj had taught her to reject all supernatural events and beliefs as irrational, to rely upon her own intellect in assessing claims of revelation and to trust her conscience as her moral and spiritual guide. One way in which Geraldine challenged these assumptions was by questioning the reliability of conscience as a spiritual guide. She argued that only when conscience was illuminated by the Truth was it a reliable guide in life. And Truth, Geraldine urged, was only found within the Anglican Church.

Responding to Ramabai's insistence that everything taught to her had to be proved by scripture Geraldine drew on texts and narratives from the Old and the New Testaments to persuade Ramabai of the necessity of receiving Faith humbly and dutifully as a child. Examples were drawn from the scriptures to demonstrate the necessity of a period of probation, of learning and instruction, first as a child and then as a mature adult. In answer to Ramabai's complaint that many aspects of Christianity were irrational Geraldine argued that faith was a mystery, a revelation to which reason did not always have the key. Finally, Geraldine used a gender prescriptive text in an effort to persuade her of the necessity of submitting to the authority of the Church.

75 Geraldine to Ramabai, October 5, 1885, Letters and Correspondence, pp 99-100.
76 Sister Geraldine to Ramabai, October 5, 1885, Letters and Correspondence pp 91-92.
77 Geraldine to Ramabai, October 5, 1885, Letters and Correspondence pp 91-96.
78 Geraldine to Ramabai, October 5, 1885, Letters and Correspondence pp 99-96, 99.
79 Geraldine to Ramabai, October 5, 1885, Letters and Correspondence p 97.
"You are, as I have said before, but a babe in the Faith, and your
duty is to sit as a humble learner in the School of Christ. "Let a woman learn in
quietness with all subjection", is St Paul’s command to the Church." When you
have thoroughly grasped the deep doctrines of the Christian Faith, it will be time
enough then to seek instruction as to the discipline which exists in the different
branches of the Catholic Church. God by His Providence guided you here, and led
you on, as we believed, to be baptised in the English branch of the Church, it is,
therefore, your duty to learn from that branch of the Faith you then
embraced. 80

Geraldine castigated Ramabai in her letter of October 5, 1895. She
raised a number of issues with her including the possibility that she had made a
false profession of faith at her baptism. 81 She rebuked Ramabai for rejecting
her advice and immersing herself in anti-Catholic literature without first having
an adequate understanding of the Catholic Faith, and she charged her with
vanity and arrogance for presuming to be a teacher when she was but a
neophyte in the faith. 82 As for Mano’s spiritual education, Geraldine did not
believe Ramabai was in a fit spiritual condition to judge what was best for her
child. 83 Finally with reference to Ramabai’s desire to be accepted at Wantage
for training, Geraldine stipulated a number of conditions.

80 Geraldine to Ramabai, October 5, 1895, Letters and Correspondence p 99.
81 Geraldine to Ramabai, October 5, 1895, Letters and Correspondence pp 98-99.
82 Sister Geraldine to Ramabai, Oct 5, Letters and Correspondence pp 92, 94,
98-99.
83 Geraldine to Ramabai, October 5, 1895, Letters and Correspondence pp 92-93.
In her letter of the 5th October Geraldine established a list of conditions in response to Ramabai's request for training and discipline at Wantage.\textsuperscript{84} Essentially they were the rules which governed the life of a postulant.

(1) Obedience.
(2) Work and study times to be allotted at the discretion of the Community.
(3) All reading material to be scrutinized, including private letters. (Ramabai would be required to furnish the Mother Superior with a list of all her correspondents).
(4) All the canonical hours to be attended and the service diligently followed. (Geraldine added that Ramabai's habit of reading the Bible whenever she was so inclined during the liturgy would no longer be allowed).
(5) Finally whilst Ramabai's vegetarianism would be respected, her objections to eggs being used in puddings would no longer be tolerated. Such a trifling objection was, in Geraldine's opinion, nothing less than a symptom of Ramabai's caste pride.\textsuperscript{85}

A contributing factor to the deterioration of Geraldine's health during this period was her anxiety over Ramabai. In October she was advised to have six months complete rest.\textsuperscript{86} Geraldine's second October letter, written from Bath during her six months convalescence, was a defence of the exclusiveness of the Catholic tradition. In a previous letter Ramabai had charged the CSMV with sectarianism because it failed to be charitable to other Christian bodies, quoting as her authority B. F. Westcott's \textit{The Historic Faith}, which she argued acknowledged the spiritual status of other denominational bodies.\textsuperscript{87} Geraldine retaliated, stating that in her opinion Westcott's definition of Catholicity meant universality but not necessarily inclusiveness.\textsuperscript{88} Rather, she wrote, Catholicity

\textsuperscript{84} Sister Geraldine to Ramabai, October 5, 1885, \textit{Letters and Correspondence} pp 100-101.
\textsuperscript{85} Sister Geraldine, October 5, 1885, \textit{Letters and Correspondence} pp 100-101.
\textsuperscript{86} Ramabai to Sister Geraldine, October 30, 1885, no 1, \textit{Notebooks of Sister Geraldine}.
\textsuperscript{87} Sister Geraldine to Ramabai, "Bath" October 1885, \textit{Letters and Correspondence} pp 103-104.
\textsuperscript{88} Sister Geraldine, "Bath" October 1885, \textit{Letters and Correspondence} p 105.
referred to the breadth of the Catholic tradition and to its comprehensiveness in perserving all aspects of truth.\textsuperscript{89} Truth, Geraldine argued, was balanced and preserved only within the Catholic tradition. Dissenters, she believed, erred by not subscribing to the whole of that tradition. Furthermore, she added, they tended to over exaggerate some doctrines to the detriment of others.\textsuperscript{90} Geraldine contrasted the discipline and authority of the Church of England with the licence and anarchy which she assumed was inherent in many forms of government within dissenting traditions.\textsuperscript{91}

Geraldine's letters dated October 5th, and "Bath" October 1885, identified one of the major conflicts between Ramabai and the CSMV as the freedom of the individual versus the authority of the Community. The Baptists at Bristol believed in the fundamental right of the individual to follow the leading of God through his or her own conscience.\textsuperscript{92} Richard Glover subscribed to the priesthood of all believers and questioned the authority and the function of priests, particularly of the Catholic tradition.\textsuperscript{93} Many of his opinions regarding "priest-craft" co-incided with Ramabai's own experiences of priests in India, which undoubtedly stemmed from her father's defiance of priestly authority at Udupi.

As we discussed, the role of conscience as a moral guide was a principle which was firmly held by the Brahmo Samaj. Keshub's teaching on adesh, whilst it might have had particular application to "Great Men", nonetheless had its origins in the idea of conscience as a faculty of spiritual and moral guidance. As such it was an experience to which lesser mortals could lay claim.

\textsuperscript{89} Sister Geraldine, "Bath" October 1885, Letters and Correspondence p 105.
\textsuperscript{90} Sister Geraldine, "Bath" October, 1885, Letters and Correspondence p 105.
\textsuperscript{91} Geraldine to Ramabai, "Bath" October 1885, Letters and Correspondence p 106.
\textsuperscript{93} Roberts, op.cit., p 116; Glover, "Isaac Allen" Baptist Handbook 1911, p 474. See also Talbot, op.cit., p 24.
Similarly conscience as an avenue of spiritual guidance was a common belief of Christendom, although traditions varied both in their understanding of it and in the restraints under which it was permitted to operate. Richard Glover advocated a system of church government which gave the individual the greatest freedom to exercise religious conviction. Baptists advocated the autonomy of the local congregation and General Baptists such as Glover and Allen were reluctant to enforce doctrinal conformity through creedal affirmations. Instead they were content to rely on the Holy Spirit to lead the believer into truth. Private judgement was therefore an important principle of Baptist belief and practice and one which, in light of Glover's criticisms of Wantage, he undoubtedly encouraged Ramabai to adopt.

In contrast to the Baptist stress on the individual, Sister Geraldine claimed that conscience was only a reliable guide when it had been illuminated by the truths of the Catholic Faith. Therefore, whilst the Baptists gave greater recognition to individual conviction and to the duty of the individual to act upon it, the CSMV as a religious community incorporated individual conviction into a strong communal framework. Authority, for the CSMV, was centred in The Community Rule. It was the Rule which ordered the life of the Community and by definition it required the surrender of individual rights to the communal good. Whilst the CSMV recognized individual conviction as an indication of divine leading it retained the right to test and subsequently verify it. Consequently the Community sought to cultivate those qualities in its members which were conducive to the maintenance of its authority. Accordingly, Sister Geraldine's

96 Ibid, p 28
98 Sister Geraldine to Ramabai, October 5, 1886, Letters and Correspondance p 91.
99 Canon Butler to Dorothea Beale, June 17, 1894, Letters and Correspondance p 46.
letters to Ramabai frequently criticized the latter’s pride, vanity and arrogance, whilst stressing the need for her to cultivate the attitudes of humility, obedience and child-like trust, qualities which were highly valued in a religious community with a strong central authority and hierarchical structure.

The Baptist influence had first exerted its influence in the Sanskrit Debate. In the Trinitarian Controversy Ramabai used the Baptist principle of liberty of conscience as well as Baptist teaching on the guidance of the Holy Spirit to justify her acceptance of Christian baptism, in spite of her rejection of the Trinity. 100 Similarly she questioned the necessity of having to assent to any creed, asserting that personal faith in Christ was all that was required of her to accept baptism. 101 Ramabai admitted that she appropriated truths from various traditions, which was evident from her usage of fundamental Baptist principles in her struggle for independence from the CSMV. 102 But in her appropriation of Baptist ideas, she also absorbed Baptist prejudice against Anglican authority and spirituality. 103 However, due to the influence of the Brahmo Samaj neither the Baptists nor the Anglicans were able to convince her that the doctrine of the Trinity had any intellectual credibility.

St Hilda’s Sunday

"St Hilda’s Sunday" is an important letter because it explains Ramabai’s decision to leave the Community and the reasons behind it. It was written to Dorothea Beale, but it is undated. The greetings reveal that Ramabai was at St Hilda’s Cheltenham at the time of writing and the content discloses that the relationship between herself and the CSMV was particularly strained. An examination of the contents suggests that "St Hilda’s

100 Ramabai to Sister Geraldine, September 22, 1885, Letters and Correspondence, pp 88-89.
101 Ramabai to Geraldine, September 22, 1885, Letters and Correspondence, p 88.
102 "The Pundita Ramabai" Inter-Ocean, Chicago, December 10, 1887
103 Glover, "Isaac Allen" Baptist Handbook, 1911, p 474.
"St Hilda’s Sunday" was Ramabai’s response to Geraldine’s letter of October 5th, a response which she chose to make to Dorothea rather than Geraldine. Ramabai did not reply to Geraldine until October 15. Further examination of the letter’s contents will support the contention that "St Hilda’s Sunday" can be dated between October 5 and October 12, 1886. A further letter of Ramabai’s to Dorothea Beale on October 12 was very different in tone. It was subdued and essentially contained a reminder to Dorothea of the irrevocable differences which had arisen between herself and the CSMV; as such it can be regarded as the terminus ad quem for the dating of "St Hilda’s Sunday." 105

The content of "St Hilda’s Sunday" contains a reference to Geraldine’s list of conditions for Ramabai’s return to Wantage, specifically the requirement to submit all correspondence to the Community. Likewise it mentions Geraldine’s comments of the 5th October regarding Ramabai’s caste pride. Ramabai wrote,

"She (Geraldine) sees my pride and caste prejudice – as she calls it – even in pies and puddings." 107

"St Hilda’s Sunday" also identified the doctrine of the Trinity as the prime cause of the dispute between Ramabai and Geraldine, which further supports the suggested dating of the letter. Compounding the evidence for this date is that "St Hilda’s Sunday" disclosed Ramabai’s dilemma whether to return to Wantage immediately and make preparations to return to India or to

104 Ramabai to Sister Geraldine, October 15, 1886, Letters and Correspondence pp 107-109
105 Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, October 12, 1886, Letters and Correspondence p 141.
106 Ramabai to Dorothea, "St Hilda’s Sunday" 1886, Letters and Correspondence p 153.
107 Geraldine to Ramabai, October 5, 1886; Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, St Hilda’s Sunday, 1886, Letters and Correspondence pp 100-153.
108 Cf, Geraldine’s letter of October 5, 1886 and "St Hilda’s Sunday", Letters and Correspondence pp 93, 94, 151-152.
stay at Cheltenham until the end of the term. In the light of the above there can be little doubt that "St Hilda’s Sunday" was Ramabai’s immediate reaction to Geraldine’s letter of October 5, 1885.

"St Hilda’s Sunday" identified the points of dispute between Ramabai and the CSMV as: (1) Ramabai’s failure to assent to the Athanasian Creed; (2) her rejection of the authority of Church of England, and (3) her association with theists and dissenters. Ramabai also informed Dorothea that Geraldine had charged her with perjury for making promises before God at her baptism which she never intended to keep.

Ramabai defended her action in not confiding her spiritual doubts and reservations to the CSMV on the grounds of the unsympathetic response of the Community. Likewise she admitted that her own difficulties had been and were being generated by her inability to persuade the Brahma Samaj of the supernatural beliefs of Christianity. The remainder of the letter was a defence by Ramabai of the universality of the rite of baptism and a rejection of its use as a sacrament of initiation into any particular church or party. Furthermore, she justified her decision to accept baptism on the basis of her understanding of scripture, referring to Acts 8: 36-37. A confession that Christ was the Son of God was all that was required of the Ethiopian Eunuch, Ramabai complained, not a detailed affirmation of every article of the Athanasian Creed. Most importantly the letter contained Ramabai’s statement to

109 Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, St Hilda's Sunday, Letters and Correspondence p 153.
110 Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, "St Hilda’s" Sunday, 1885, Letters and Correspondence pp 150-153.
111 Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, "St Hilda’s Sunday", 1885, Letters and Correspondence p 152.
112 Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, "St Hilda’s Sunday" 1885, Letters and Correspondence p 151. See also Ramabai’s letter to Ramabai Ranae, Summer 1884, Adhav, op.cit., pp 110-117.
113 Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, "St Hilda’s Sunday" 1885, Letters and Correspondence pp 151-152.
Dorothea that she would not accept Geraldine's conditions, particularly the requirement to submit all her correspondence to the scrutiny of the Community and to adhere to a restricted reading programme. As a result, she declared she had no alternative but to leave the Community.  

**America**

Ramabai resolved her difficulties with the CSMV by accepting an invitation from Professor Rachel Bodley, Dean of the Woman's Medical College of Philadelphia, to attend the graduation of a distant relative, Anandabai Joshi.\(^{115}\) Ramabai had been corresponding with Rachel Bodley for about a year and the invitation to attend her cousin's graduation had been issued on a number of occasions.\(^{116}\) In her search for a way out of her dilemma with the CSMV, America appeared to be a god-send and Ramabai interpreted it in that light.\(^{117}\) She informed Dorothea that she was convinced God had called her to undertake this venture, even though Rachel Bodley had been unable to guarantee any long term financial support.\(^{118}\)

Dorothea Beale attempted to forestall Ramabai's departure. She enlisted the aid of the Cambridge theologian and author of *The Historic Faith*, Canon Brooke Foss Westcott, later Bishop of Durham.\(^{119}\) Together they attempted to raise sufficient funds to support Ramabai at Cheltenham independently of the CSMV.\(^{120}\) Dorothea attempted to raise the money from a

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114 Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, "St Hilda's Sunday", *Letters and Correspondence* p 153.
115 Rachel Bodley to Pandita Ramabai, December 28, 1885, *Letters and Correspondence* pp 164-166.
116 Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, December 12, 1885, *Letters and Correspondence* p 163.
117 Ramabai to Dorothea, January 12, 1886, *Letters and Correspondence* p 166.
118 Rachel Bodley to Ramabai, December 28, 1885, *Letters and Correspondence* p 165.
119 On Westcott, see Chadwick, *The Victorian Church*, Part Two p 509.
120 Canon Wescott to Dorothea Beale, December 11, 1885, *Beale Correspondence*. Ramabai had been receiving funds from the Royal Bounty Fund
number of sources including the India Office.\footnote{121} Particularly generous was a Mr Fitzgerald, who agreed to financially assist Ramabai on condition that she remained in England.\footnote{122}

Dorothea and Canon Westcott believed that a further year at Cheltenham, away from all controversy with the CSMV would give Ramabai time to think and to come to an understanding of the Anglican Faith.\footnote{123} Canon Westcott described Ramabai during the latter months of 1885 as displaying a "spirit of controversy," an opinion which Sister Geraldine shared.\footnote{124} Both Canon Westcott and Dorothea Beale were likewise concerned about Ramabai’s exegesis of biblical texts.\footnote{125} It appeared to them that she was intent upon justifying her own beliefs at all costs. The confidence with which Ramabai attempted an exegesis of the Greek and English texts with so little experience in those languages or in Christian theology suggests the influence of Baptist confidence in private judgement.\footnote{126} It certainly seemed to Dorothea that a resolution of Ramabai’s spiritual doubts would require time and not a little patience. All were afraid that if she went to America she would be lost to Anglicanism.

as well as her own earnings as a part-time lecturer at College. These were insufficient to support herself and Mano. The CSMV therefore had also supplemented Ramabai's expenses.

121 Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, December 12, 1885, Letters and Correspondence pp 163-164.
122 Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, January 13 1886, Letters and Correspondence p 167.
123 Canon Westcott to Dorothea Beale, December 11, 1885, Beale Correspondence.
124 Canon Westcott to Dorothea Beale, December 11, 1885, Beale Correspondence; Sister Geraldine to Dorothea Beale, January 1886, Letters and Correspondence p 114. Ramabai visited Canon Westcott and his associate, F. J. A. Hort in November 1885. See Dorothea’s letter to Geraldine, November 1885, Letters and Correspondence pp 110-111.
125 Canon Westcott to Dorothea Beale, December 11, 1885, Beale Correspondence; Ramabai to Dorothea Beale December 1, 1885, Letters and Correspondence p 162.
Ramabai declined all offers of help and she and Manoramabai left England for America in February 1886.\textsuperscript{127} The CSMV were deeply attached to Manoramabai and sought Ramabai's permission to be Mano's legal guardians in the event of her mother's death, a request which Ramabai refused.\textsuperscript{128} In her letter to Miss Noble, Ramabai stated that she had never been comfortable with the beliefs of the Anglican Church and had been distressed to find that the CSMV had been indoctrinating her daughter into Trinitarianism.\textsuperscript{129} Demonstrating again her sympathy with Baptist beliefs, she described Manoramabai's baptism as simply a dedication to God. She did not attribute any sacramental power to the rite. Furthermore, she added, Mano's baptism did not bind her to belief in any dogma or involve her in membership of any particular church.\textsuperscript{130} In affirming the Baptist practice of infant dedication as opposed to infant baptism and in rejecting all Trinitarian teaching and expression of faith, Ramabai did nothing to restore Geraldine's confidence in her maternal instincts. Furthermore the return of Manoramabai to the Community in July 1886 (predominately due to Ramabai's inability to arrange suitable care for the child), convinced Geraldine that Ramabai's ambitions continued to take precedence over her maternal responsibilities.\textsuperscript{131}

\textbf{The Apostles' Creed}

In response to the CSMV's accusation that she had committed perjury by accepting Christian baptism, Ramabai appealed to the Apostles' Creed as the substance of her Christian beliefs.\textsuperscript{132} Indeed she argued, the Apostles' Creed

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{127} Miss Noble to Sister Geraldine, February 18, 1886, \textit{Notebooks of Geraldine}.
  \item \textsuperscript{128} Ramabai to Geraldine, May 20, 1887, \textit{Letters and Correspondence} p 199.
  \item \textsuperscript{129} Ramabai to Miss Noble, July 6, 1886, \textit{Letters and Correspondence} p 197.
  \item \textsuperscript{130} Ramabai to Miss Noble, July 6, 1886, \textit{Letters and Correspondence} pp 196-197.
  \item \textsuperscript{131} Ramabai to Geraldine, July 21, 1886, \textit{Letters and Correspondence} p 198.
  \item \textsuperscript{132} "Hindu Child-Widows" July 26, 1887, \textit{Inter-Ocean} Chicago; "The Pundita Ramabai" \textit{Inter-Ocean}, Chicago, December 10, 1887; Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, November 29, 1885, \textit{Letters and Correspondence} p 159.
\end{itemize}
had been the statement of faith which she had sincerely accepted at her baptism.\textsuperscript{133} Whether she was aware of the status of the Creed as the litmus test of Christian orthodoxy is unclear, but she frequently alluded to it as proof of her Christian faith throughout her residency in the United States.\textsuperscript{134} The question arises in light of her frequent denial of the divine status of Christ, of the Incarnation, and of a bodily resurrection whether such a claim could have been honestly justified.

Ramabai’s exegesis of scripture throughout the Trinitarian Controversy disclosed her ability to interpret texts very fluidly. Canon Westcott described one such attempt as a complete “misconception” of St Paul.\textsuperscript{135} Unfortunately, the letter does not identify the point at issue. However Ramabai’s debate with Charles Gore indicated that she was creatively searching for interpretations conducive to her own beliefs.\textsuperscript{136} In her response to Geraldine’s argument that prayers addressed to Christ in the New Testament justified his divine status, Ramabai countered with her own interpretation of one such example, Stephen’s dying words in Acts: 7:59 “Lord Jesus receive my spirit”.\textsuperscript{137} She argued that these words were not a prayer to Christ and thus an acknowledgement of his divinity but simply a witness by Stephen to Christ’s presence at the right hand of God.\textsuperscript{138} Therefore, whilst the Apostles’ Creed has in the light of subsequent conciliar statements on the deity of Christ clearly

\textsuperscript{133} “Hindu Child-Widows,” July 26, 1887, Inter-Ocean, Chicago, July 26, 1887; “The Pundita Ramabai” Inter-Ocean, Chicago, December 10, 1887.
\textsuperscript{134} “Hindu Child-Widows, Inter-Ocean, Chicago, July 26, 1887; “The Pundita Ramabai” Inter-Ocean, Chicago, December 10, 1887.
\textsuperscript{135} Canon Westcott to Dorothea Beale, December 11, 1885, Beale Correspondence, Cheltenham.
\textsuperscript{136} Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, Summer 1885, Letters and Correspondence pp 149-150.
\textsuperscript{137} Geraldine to Ramabai, October 5, 1885, Letters and Correspondence pp 95-96.
\textsuperscript{138} Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, October 12, 1885, Letters and Correspondence p 142.
become an affirmation of the Trinity, it is capable of a non-Trinitarian interpretation. Ramabai may well have interpreted the Apostles' Creed in that sense. But how was she able to rationalize those statements in the Creed which were based upon a supernatural world view, a weltanschauung, she consistently rejected? 139 And therefore, how could she have justified her appeal to the Creed as a summary of her own faith? In effect she could not, and in her letter to Dorothea of November 29, 1885, she confessed her unacceptance of certain key statements in the Apostles' Creed. These included the Incarnation, the descent into hell and the bodily resurrection of Christ.140

On other occasions Ramabai refused to commit herself to any creed and appealed instead to the Bible as containing the substance of her beliefs.141 But as with the Apostles' Creed her appeal to the Bible was deliberately vague and was not intended to explicate her beliefs but to reassure an interested public that she was a Christian.142 As the evidence stands there are no indications of any significant change in Ramabai's theological position between her baptism at Wantage and the events leading up to her second conversion. The question therefore might well be asked, "What did she believe on the eve of her American tour?" The answer lies in her creed of June 1885. There she confessed that she believed that Jesus was the Son of God and Saviour of the world.143 The simplicity of that belief, she argued, was all that was required of

139 Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, 31st May 1885; Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, November 29, 1885, Letters and Correspondence pp 154-156, 159-160.
140 Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, November 29, 1885, Letters and Correspondence pp 159-160.
141 "Pundita Ramabai's Views" Central New Jersey Times, Plainfield, June 16, 1887.
143 Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, June 21, 1885, Letters and Correspondence pp 157-159.
her to accept Christian baptism.\textsuperscript{144} To summarize therefore, it was Ramabai’s creed of June 1885 which formed the basis of her beliefs during this period and not the Apostles’ Creed as she inferred during her American tour.

Ramabai’s departure for America signalled the end of all pretence to her commitment to Anglicanism. Her “curious” request for discipline and training at Wantage had revealed a degree of confusion indicative of the stress she was under during the last few months of her residency in England. Interestingly she always believed that Wantage had taught her order and discipline but as Sister Geraldine remarked, she was never subjected to the discipline of a religious house.\textsuperscript{145} In spite of the events which led to her departure, Ramabai did not sever her relationship with Sister Geraldine or the CSMV. The bond between Ramabai and Sister Geraldine was renewed with the return to Wantage of Manoraramabai in 1886. Mano provided a consistent link between the two women until Geraldine’s death in 1918. And whilst the tone of their correspondence was on the whole warm, and gifts were regularly sent and received, the occasions in which differences of opinion surfaced between them were inevitably in relation to Manoraramabai.\textsuperscript{146} For although the hopes of the CSMV for Ramabai’s return to Anglicanism faded with the years, the Community continued to hope that Manoraramabai would declare her allegiance to the Church at some future date and to that end it maintained an interest in her spiritual welfare.\textsuperscript{147} Nor was

\textsuperscript{144} Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, St Hilda’s Sunday, \textit{Letters and Correspondence} p 152.
\textsuperscript{145} Sister Geraldine to Miss Beale, January 1886, \textit{Letters and Correspondence} p 114; Fuller, \textit{Triumph of a Hindu Widow} p 27.
\textsuperscript{146} Ramabai kept a photograph of Geraldine over her desk at both the Sharada Sadan and Mukti. See Ramabai’s letter to Geraldine, June 4, 1899 \textit{Letters and Correspondence} p 238. On differences of opinion between Geraldine and Ramabai concerning Mano see \textit{Letters and Correspondence} 315-318.
\textsuperscript{147} Sister Emily Salome was given specific instructions in 1890 to investigate Mano’s religious attitudes and the nature of the religious instruction she was receiving. See Emily’s letter to Geraldine, “Whitsunday” 1890, \textit{Notebooks of Geraldine}. 
the Community to be disappointed. Much to the delight of the CSMV, Manoramabai was confirmed in 1903 in New Zealand by the Anglican Bishop of Christchurch. 148

148 Father Page to Sister Geraldine, May 26, 1903, Letters and Correspondence p 383.
Preliminary Conclusion

An analysis of the deterioration of Ramabai’s relationship with the CSMV and her subsequent rejection of Anglicanism has revealed certain events, attitudes, elements and associations as crucial.

(1) Pressure

The decision of the CSMV to pressure Ramabai into accepting baptism so soon after her arrival in England and perhaps inadvertently contributing to the suicide of Anandabai Bhagat unquestionably produced in Ramabai a degree of resentment. This factor, combined with her inability to confide in the CSMV and its continued efforts to control her behaviour even at Cheltenham through the reports of Mrs Poole, explains the pent-up emotion unleashed in the Sanskrit Debate. The Community’s desire to control Ramabai was evident in the correspondence regarding the visits to Bristol. It rationalized its behaviour on the grounds that it was in the position of Ramabai’s guardian and that in spite of her age and status as a widow her race determined that she was to be subjected to the social limitations of much younger women. As a result Geraldine questioned Dorothea’s authority in permitting Ramabai too much freedom of movement and of association and she was particularly critical of the visits to Bristol. The pressure upon Ramabai to obey Geraldine as her religious director and the restrictions placed upon her personal liberty surfaced during the Sanskrit Debate and finally erupted in the Trinitarian Controversy. Ultimately both controversies were attempts by Ramabai to secure her independence from the Community.

(2) Encapsulation.

Closely associated with the pressures to believe and obey was the Community’s attempts to suppress any sign of rebellion in Ramabai. Whilst the Baptists at Bristol instructed Ramabai in the principle of religious liberty, Geraldine was intent upon re-establishing her control over Ramabai which she believed had been largely eroded by Dorothea Beale’s liberal attitudes.
Encapsulation was a tried and true method of the CSMV and upon discovering the seriousness of Ramabai's religious doubts it was one which Geraldine attempted to impose again. The first occasion had proven successful and for a year Ramabai appeared to have adopted the beliefs and life-style of the Community. At Cheltenham Geraldine did not have the co-operation of Dorothea Beale to impose similar restrictions upon Ramabai nor the daily opportunities to reinforce the values of the Community. As we noted, Dorothea believed that protecting Ramabai from divergent views was counterproductive. And it was Ramabai's contacts with divergent points of view which ultimately defeated Geraldine's efforts to control her. But contact with alternate views also contributed towards Ramabai's theological confusion and frustration, as Geraldine observed. 149

Ramabai's request to return to the Community under discipline, therefore, appeared providential to Geraldine and she issued a list of conditions which would have effectively brought Ramabai under the strict control of the CSMV. Instead of returning to Wantage under such conditions, Ramabai chose to depart for America. The pressure on Ramabai to believe and to conform to the expectations of the CSMV and its efforts to control her freedom of movement and association played an important role in her disaffection from Anglicanism.

149 Sister Geraldine to Ramabai, Oct, 5, 1885, Letters and Correspondence p 92.
(3) Political issues.

In 1907 Geraldine commented that the racial and political implications in the title of the Church, as the Church of England, had been offensive to Ramabai. There was undoubtedly some truth in that observation but British paternalism, as we noted, proved far more offensive to her in the long term. In spite of Geraldine’s later observations, in the mid 1880s she had displayed little awareness of racial and gender prejudices within the Community and the Church or of her own particular responsibility in their conveyance. Unlike Dorothea Beale, she never realised the importance of egalitarianism as a primary motive for Ramabai’s conversion and therefore she failed to appreciate the subtle interplay of politics, race and gender which had characterized the Sanskrit Debate. From Ramabai’s perspective the Debate had illustrated the complexity of her relationship with the Church of England. British paternalism and the espousal of racially defining and derogatory characteristics by leaders of the Church had underscored her status as a member of a subject nation.

Although the bishops would naturally expect deference from subordinates and potential employees, it was clear from their correspondence that their criticisms of Ramabai’s behaviour were coloured by racial attitudes which in turn influenced their gender expectations of her. If Ramabai had entered religious life then not only would she have been expected to display a suitably self-effacing demeanour due to her chosen vocation and gender but her race would further imprint such expectations, with racially defining characteristics having an influence on any interpretation of her behaviour. As we have seen, the assumption that Ramabai would enter religious life was a major influence on the attitudes and behaviour of members of the Community.

150 Sister Geraldine, Letters and Correspondence, p 406. The comment is undated but Geraldine completed her compilation of Ramabai’s correspondence in 1907, adding only a postscript in 1917. See Letters and Correspondence pp 3-5.
Unfortunately, it has been obvious how little Ramabai understood of Anglicanism or even of English society during this period. Furthermore, it appears that she was led to believe, perhaps through the ministry of Isaac Allen, that Christianity condemned racial and gender discrimination between Christians. Indeed she believed Christianity to be the only religion which was able to truly liberate women. But whilst Dorothea Beale was able to assure Geraldine that Ramabai realised that the female was a subordinate gender, it is clear from other comments Ramabai made, that she was generally anxious about any such restrictions.\textsuperscript{151} Having combatted prejudice and discrimination in India, Ramabai believed her status in life had, through the acquisition of salvation, undoubtedly risen. As she said,

"...no one but He (Christ) could transform and uplift the downtrodden women of India and of every land."\textsuperscript{152}

Such differing expectations only served to exacerbate the nature of the conflicts which arose.

One of Ramabai's deepest concerns in England was to maintain her racial identity. She argued that it was not necessary to her conversion to divest herself of the traditions of her ancestors, if they were neither harmful, hurtful, or immoral.\textsuperscript{153} She would not have been unaware of the number of Indians who adopted western dress and manners and who were caricatured by Indians and Englishmen alike.\textsuperscript{154} Denationalization was an issue which clearly concerned her; more so for Mano than herself. As we saw, her perception of racial integrity was markedly different from others in the Sanskrit Debate. But to what degree her determination to maintain her cultural identity influenced her

\textsuperscript{151} Dorothea Beale to Sister Geraldine, May 8, 1885; Ramabai to Geraldine, May 12, 1885, Letters and Correspondence pp 49-49, 50-61
\textsuperscript{152} Ramabai, A Testimony p 26.
\textsuperscript{153} Ramabai to Sister Geraldine, October 15, 1885 Letters and Correspondence p 109.
\textsuperscript{154} Sen, "Jesus Christ: Europe and Asia," Lectures in India, pp 25-27.
attitude towards the CSMV is impossible to estimate. Racial prejudice was a far more obvious influence, and one which she was quick to identify and denounce. It is not unreasonable however, to conclude that her lack of sympathy with the religious culture of the CSMV was influenced by a number of events and attitudes; amongst which, was her concern to maintain her cultural identity and which Geraldine frequently castigated as caste pride. Ramabai’s self esteem, which may well have reflected to some degree the influence of Keshub Chunder Sen’s views on racial pride and integrity, undoubtedly rankled her British hosts, but so did their display of racial prejudice and paternalism offend her. Sister Geraldine’s frequent references to Ramabai’s vanity and her short-comings as a mother, for example, clearly influenced the latter’s behaviour and attitudes and without doubt contributed to her increasing alienation from the CSMV.

(3) The Religious Culture of the CSMV

One of the most obvious features of Ramabai’s correspondence between 1883-1886 was her poor understanding of Anglican culture and faith. Our examination of the Community’s culture revealed the importance it attached to the role of authority. Obedience was considered a vital quality for those entering upon religious life. Ramabai’s intimation that she wanted to join the Community and her silence for more than a year on the matter of her religious doubt, gave the CSMV the impression that she understood the nature of its Community and was prepared to adhere to its values.155 Ramabai’s request for discipline and training by the CSMV only a few months before her departure from England further suggests that her understanding of the culture of the CSMV had not improved with the passing months. In addition, her request to Geraldine to instruct Mano in a view of Christ, which was not only heretical in the eyes of the Community but deeply hurtful to its interior life was a further indication of her ignorance and general lack of sympathy with Anglicanism.

155 Ramabai to Geraldine, October 1884; Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, October 12, 1885, Letters and Correspondence, pp 27-29, 141.
Similarly her lack of empathy with Anglican worship and liturgy was another contributory factor to her sense of alienation from the Community.\textsuperscript{156} A. J. Appasamy has drawn attention to the traditional criticism of religious formality by bhaktas, arguing that it is the inward character of religion which is of the essence of devotion for them, not rites and ceremonies.\textsuperscript{157} But whilst there may well have been a cultural antipathy on Ramabai’s part towards religious formalism, her increasing deafness and her sense of alienation were also obvious influences in her attitude towards Anglican worship. Deafness, alienation and a cultural predisposition against religious formalism; any of these factors would account for her practice of pursuing her own private devotions during the canonical hours, a practice which sparked Geraldine’s criticism of her failure to join in the liturgy.\textsuperscript{158}

(4) Anglican Authority

The issue of Anglican authority coloured both the Sanskrit Debate and the Trinitarian Controversy, throwing Ramabai into direct conflict with the CSMV. The right of the individual to private judgement versus the authority of the Church lay at the basis of both disputes. The Baptists were very influential in providing Ramabai with theological arguments for resisting the Church of England’s authority, such as the principles of sola scriptura, the priesthood of all believers, and religious liberty. Although Ramabai was obviously attracted to the Baptist Faith it is interesting to note that she did not consider changing her religious allegiance at this time, in spite of her tensions with the Wantage Community. This was partly due to her concern not to appear ungrateful to the community which had facilitated her conversion to Christianity or to damage its

\textsuperscript{156} Ramabai to Sister Geraldine, June 25, \textit{Letters and Correspondence}, p 68.
\textsuperscript{158} Geraldine to Ramabai, October 5, 1895, \textit{Letters and Correspondence}, p 100.
reputation in the eyes of others. But it was also partly due to her awareness that Baptists subscribed to the deity of Christ as deeply as Anglicans and their faith in doctrines such as the Incarnation and the bodily resurrection of Christ were just as fervently proclaimed. Although she found certain Baptist principles useful in combating Anglican authority the degree to which she was committed to them varied. She was certainly committed to the principles of religious liberty and the priesthood of all believers; they were useful in maintaining her religious independence from the CSMV. But, as she demonstrated by her attitude to supernaturalism, she proved to be flexible in the matter of biblical authority which was a dearly held principle by Baptists of all persuasions.

The accumulation of many unresolved issues, the pressures being exerted by rival traditions and her own spiritual doubts saw Ramabai locked into a confrontationalist position with the Wantage Community by the end of 1885. The Sanskrit Debate had revealed to her that obedience as a religious ideal was compounded in her case, by racial as well as gender attitudes. "Liberty" became, as she described it, her particular word and her lack of it a bone of contention. Except that she was no longer hindered by the restrictions and stigma of widowhood, she concluded that her conversion had not brought her any greater liberty to pursue her own programme in England than she had had in Poona as a member of the Prarthana Samaj. It was a significant factor in her decision to leave England and consequently, Anglicanism.

(3) Sectarian Rivalry

Geraldine attributed a large share of the blame for Ramabai's

159 Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, October 12, 1885, Letters and Correspondence p 142.
160 Torbet, op.cit., p 16.
161 Ramabai to Sister Geraldine, May 12, 1885, Letters and Correspondence p 61.
defection from Anglicanism to Nonconformists. Not exclusively, she was aware of
the powerful influence of the Brahmo Samaj in shaping Ramabai's attitudes
towards supernaturalism and Trinitarianism but she believed that the attention
Ramabai was paid by Nonconformists and by individuals such as Mrs Gilmore,
had a de-stabilizing effect on her confidence in the CSMV. And there was truth
in that conclusion. Ramabai had been warned by evangelicals in Poona about the
heretical notions of the CSMV. In the course of time she was similarly warned
by her friends at Bristol and by Mrs Gilmore. Were there others who urged her
to disassociate herself from the high church Community, such as the Unitarian
ladies from London?

(6) The influence of the Brahmo Samaj

Of all the influences upon Ramabai during her years in England, the
Brahmo Samaj proved the most durable. Liberal Anglicans of the Broad Church
ethos, such as F. Max Müller, were sympathetic towards the Samaj. As a
fundamentalist and later a Roman Catholic, Lucia Fuller had little time for
theological liberalism and she accused Max Miller of putting "Bai off the
Christian track" during this period.\(^\text{163}\) But there is no evidence of any conflict
between Max Müller and the Wantage Community. In fact Max Miller's
relationship with the CSMV appeared cordial.\(^\text{164}\) Although he questioned the
necessity of Ramabai's baptism he did not attempt to undermine her association
with Wantage. On the contrary he was keen to do what he could to assist her
and as we saw he subsequently provided her with letters of introduction to
influential friends in America. Max Miller's influence, if at all significant, would
have lain in his empathy with India and the Brahmo Samaj.

As we have noted, the Brahmo Samaj's advocacy of rationalism as
the basis of all knowledge, in spite of Keshub's inclusion of concepts such as

\(^\text{163}\) Lucia Fuller's Notebook p 21.
\(^\text{164}\) Miss S.J.F. Noble to Sister Geraldine, February 18, 1886, Notebooks of
Geraldine.
adesh, was a major influence in Ramabal's rejection of key Christian doctrines. But there was a further aspect to her rejection of such dogmas. She had a fear of repeating the errors of Hinduism, of returning to superstition. Her own pilgrimage from the popular cultus of Hinduism to the Brahmo Samaj had confirmed to her that the worship of one God was a higher form of religion than the worship of many. Trinitarianism smacked of polytheism and superstition, a level of religious belief she believed she had long transcended.

In analysing Ramabal's conception of religion the model which immediately suggests itself is that of a ladder of ascent. It is not an uncommon model of spiritual progression. Ramabal wanted to rise in the hierarchy of religious knowledge not descend. Confirmation of this came from Dorothea Beale who confided to Geraldine that Ramabal was fearful of returning to a lower level of religious truth. The doctrine of the Trinity and the dogmas associated with it, therefore, appeared in Ramabal's mind to threaten that ascent and to embroil her once again in superstition. For that reason, notwithstanding the revulsion she felt for certain dogmas, to have accepted it would have been irrational.

By the end of 1885, it was clear that Ramabal's disillusionment with Anglicanism was complete. Her one moment of spiritual and emotional empathy with the Church of England had been the visit to Fulham, which sealed her decision to be baptized. The plight of women caught up in prostitution and the life of expiation they were expected to follow provided a dramatic analogy with the lives of Hindu widows. As has been shown, on Ramabal's own testimony, her conversion was gender motivated. Christianity was an improvement, a step up the ladder of ascent in terms of her status as a woman. That is not to say that she did not have a genuine faith in Christ. Her creed of June 21, 1885,

165 Ramabal to Dorothea Beale, May 8, 1885, Letters and Correspondence p 49
166 Boyd, An Introduction to Indian Christian Theology pp 129-130.
167 See Dorothea's letter to Geraldine, May 8, 1885, Letters and Correspondence p 49.
168 See for example, A Testimony pp 18-21, 30-33.
demonstrated her intellectual beliefs, and her letters, particularly from America and India, prior to her second conversion, amply testify to her deepening commitment to Christianity. But on the eve of her departure for America it could be said that Ramabai believed in Christ as her Guru, not as her God. He had proved himself to be the Saviour of all men but even more so of women and she was content to describe herself as his disciple. \(^{169}\) But in analysing her beliefs throughout her period in England, it has also been obvious that in spite of her conversion to Christianity, she continued to exhibit a marked continuity of faith with the Brahmo Samaj.\(^{170}\)

**Conclusion**

The intention of this work in the remaining chapters will be to highlight the centrality of Ramabai’s bhakti heritage and her realization of Anant Shastri’s Vision of God within the context of a charismatic Evangelicalism. These were needs which she had been unable to satisfy within Anglicanism. In spite of its long history and tradition of mysticism, The Church of England’s fear of “enthusiasm”, which pervaded it during the period under discussion, discouraged public expression of religious fervour. By contrast, bhaktas often engaged in an ecstatic outpouring of the soul whereas the worship of the CSMV was formal, restrained, dignified and very English. Ramabai’s second conversion, her experience of the baptism of the Holy Spirit and her decision to be rebaptized by immersion, will be discussed in light of her rejection of Anglicanism. It is not insignificant that when she found spiritual fulfilment, she did so within the context of her own land, and largely within her own culture. What will also become evident is that although Christianity remained her faith there were aspects to her religious experiences which were fundamentally Indian and which were suggestive of a degree of continuity with Vaishnavism. As with her first

\(^{169}\) "The Pundita Ramabai" *Inter-Ocean*, December 10, 1887, Chicago.

baptism, her second will be discussed in the light of recent studies of religious conversion.
Chapter 10: Contact with Evangelical Revivalism.

Ramabai's rejection of Anglicanism is significant for any analysis of her second Christian conversion. Yet her conversion to Evangelicalism was not a single incident but rather a series of incidents over a two year period. Describing these experiences as a second conversion is however rather an arbitrary judgement. Schreuder and Oddie's description of some conversions as a series of "turnings" towards God is in fact an appropriate description of Ramabai's religious quest.\(^1\) Whilst it allows us to regard significant events in that quest as "conversions" because they involve a change of religious affiliation, it has the added advantage of placing such "conversions" on a continuum of experience thus illustrating their causal link. As a result, whilst there were a number of significant incidents between 1891 and 1899 which precipitated Ramabai's transition to Evangelicalism and which may be designated as her "second Christian conversion", there were equally influential events in her life between 1895 and 1897 which cemented that change and subsequently drew her deeply into the Holiness Movement at the turn of the century.

**The Holiness Movement.**

The Holiness Movement, which had its antecedence in Methodism, was comprised of a network of interrelated sub-movements which were committed to personal holiness and a fervent expression of faith. It emphasized the necessity of religious experience as a source of experiential knowledge of God.\(^2\) Included within this network and relevant to our purposes was The Keswick Convention,

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The Christian and Missionary Alliance and the Pentecostal Movement. True to their Methodist heritage holiness groups stressed the primacy of "heart" religion nurtured by revival; the baptism of the Holy Ghost as a second and even third blessing following conversion and the spiritual and sometimes supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit which follow.

The leaders of the emerging Fundamentalist Movement also shared many of the beliefs and aspirations of holiness devotees. Reuben A Torrey espoused the baptism of the Holy Spirit and in common with many holiness advocates regarded belief in the premillennial return of Christ as a litmus test of orthodoxy. Similarly both movements were united by common fears, namely liberalism in theology and social mores and the ramifications of modern philosophical and scientific theories on a conservative biblical world view. The compilation of the twelve volume work, The Fundamentals, between 1910-1915, which purported to establish the essence of Christian belief for conservative evangelicals, was an attempt by a number of leading conservatives to preserve what they regarded as truth in an age of increasing scepticism and theological compromise. Its authors representing a range of conservative opinion included W. H. Griffith Thomas from the Keswick Convention; R. A. Torrey who had been associated with D. L. Moody; A. C. Gaebelein, a popular speaker in Bible and Prophetic Conference circles, and B. B. Warfield from Princeton. Considerable

7 Marsden, op.cit., pp 3-4.
8 Ibid, pp 3-5.
interaction took place amongst conservative evangelicals from these circles, many of whom had been nurtured by Bible and Prophetic Conferences and not least by D. L. Moody himself who sought for consensus and not confrontation in religious issues.  

The Christian and Missionary Alliance.

The Christian and Missionary Alliance was founded in 1887 by a former Presbyterian minister, the Reverend A. B. Simpson. Originally it was a loose interdenominational association of like-minded believers, many of whom retained their membership in other evangelical churches. Simpson did not envisage the creation of a separate denomination but rather he hoped to harness the forces within existing evangelical churches to nurture and promote the primacy of evangelism amongst Christians.

In 1882 Simpson founded the Gospel Tabernacle Church in New York which became the basis for all his subsequent ventures including the Alliance. In establishing the Tabernacle he sought to recover the New Testament pattern for the church. He believed the Church only existed when it gathered to witness to its faith in Christ and to engage in evangelism, particularly in missions to those who had never heard the Gospel. He described the Tabernacle as, "A Free Gospel Church" "on simple Scriptural and voluntary principles in the name of Jesus (to pursue) evangelistic and missionary work among the neglected and non-church going population, especially the middle-classes who are the most neglected in our great cities."

9 Ibid, pp 118-123; Sandeen, op.cit., p 199-200.
12 Niklaus, Sawin, Stoesz, op.cit., p 75, 83.
One of the controversies which divided the Holiness Movement was the issue of sanctification involving the baptism of the Holy Spirit as a second blessing following conversion. The First General Holiness Assembly held in Chicago in 1885 defined the baptism of the Holy Spirit as purification from all sin, the result of which was sanctification or instant moral perfection. The Keswick Convention, whose theology had a significant Calvinist input, rebuffed any idea of instantaneous holiness and instead taught that the baptism of the Holy Spirit initiated the process of sanctification, thereby signifying that the believer had entered upon a higher stage of spirituality in which sin could be overcome although not eradicated. But there were at least two versions of Keswick teaching on the baptism of the Holy Spirit. A second version, largely an American contribution, regarded sanctification as a pre-condition to the baptism of the Holy Spirit. It regarded the baptism as a second blessing whose purpose was to confer power for Christian service. As such it maintained that there were successive "fillings" of the Spirit as the need arose. However there was considerable fluidity in the teaching on sanctification prior to the 1890s, after which time holiness groups began to define their theology more closely and in opposition to one another.

"Sanctification" rather than "baptism of the Holy Ghost" came to be the favoured term at Keswick, even more so after the rise of Pentecostalism. Both versions of Keswick theology attempted to steer a middle course between

15 Niklaus, Sawin, Stoesz, op.cit., note 4, p 282.
18 Marsden, op.cit., pp 77-78.
20 Ibid, pp 76-79, 249,( n88).
21 Ibid, pp 78-79.
23 Marsden, op.cit., p 78.
Oberlin "Perfectionism", which originally had some influence at Keswick and the more pessimistic attitude of Calvinism to sin. Although the second Keswick view on sanctification presented a theory of successive fillings of the Holy Spirit, it like the first argued that the activity of the Spirit within the believer counteracted the tendency of the consecrated Christian to sin. 25 Other groups who described themselves as "Fire-Baptized" spoke of three crucial experiences: conversion, sanctification and the baptism of the Holy Spirit and Fire. 26 To many this was known as the "Third blessing heresy". 27 The National Holiness Association which followed the Chicago Assembly's ruling on sanctification as "Perfectionism," disbarred the Alliance from membership because it promoted faith healing, premillennialism and Keswick views on sanctification. 28

To describe the theological character of the Christian and Missionary Alliance as charismatic but conservative Evangelicalism is therefore not inappropriate. It shared with Fundamentalism a common heritage in conservative Evangelicalism. 29 Both movements also shared a common interest in premillennialism and as a result there was considerable interaction and co-operation amongst their members. 30 In fact it was not unusual for

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25 Marsden, op.cit., p 78.
26 Anderson, op.cit., p 35.
27 Ibid, p 35.
29 On the common heritage of the Fundamentalist and Holiness Movements see Sandeen, The Roots of Fundamentalism pp ix-xix; Marsden, Fundamentalism and American Culture pp 3-8.
30 There were also significant differences within the Holiness Movement on the issue of the Second Coming. Whilst premillennialism came to dominate many of the holiness groups particularly after the turn of the century, not every group was premillennialist or even dispensational premillennialist. The National Holiness Association after World War 1 for example was primarily postmillennialist. See
conservative evangelicals of many persuasions to preach from each other's pulpits or to share a common platform at conventions. Charles Blanchard, President of Wheaton College, Illinois, who wrote the doctrinal statement for the World's Christian Fundamentals Association was also an honorary Vice-President of the Christian and Missionary Alliance.\footnote{31} In an age of increasing liberalism, political uncertainty and religious scepticism, conservatives believed it was crucial to preserve the truth and Charles Blanchard did his best to ensure that Wheaton remained doctrinally pure.\footnote{32} He also ensured that students of the Alliance's missionary training institute, Nyack, were able to use Wheaton to complete their studies. \footnote{33} Therefore, what particularly distinguished fundamentalists from other evangelical conservatives during the first decades of the twentieth century was their militant and confrontationalist stance towards their opponents which erupted into the fundamentalist/modernist controversies of the 1920s. \footnote{34} William Blackstone, an associate of A. B. Simpson, spoke for many emerging leaders of Fundamentalism when he said that the new liberalism in theology was an apostate faith and one of the sure signs of Christ's Second Coming.\footnote{35} But whilst the attitude of the Alliance was in undoubted sympathy with the fundamentalist battle against modernism and its attempts to eradicate Darwinian science from class-rooms, under Simpson's guidance it sought, like D. L. Moody, to avoid controversy.\footnote{36}

The Fourfold Gospel.

Over the years the Alliance gradually formed branch fellowships,
particularly during the 1920s when conservatives left existing churches for safe havens elsewhere. 37 However it was not until 1931 that the Alliance was prepared to recognize itself as a separate denomination.38 Members had been content to be theologically united by their belief in Simpson's "Fourfold Gospel", sometimes called the "Full Gospel," whilst maintaining either their membership in other denominations or their autonomy as a branch fellowship of the Alliance. The Fourfold Gospel was an affirmation of faith in Christ as Saviour, Sanctifier, Healer and Coming King.39 Initially Simpson had proclaimed Christ as "Baptizer in the Holy Ghost" as his second affirmation but the tongues controversy which split the Alliance in 1907 caused him to substitute "Sanctifier" for "Baptizer" thus bringing the Alliance closer to Keswick views on the baptism of the Holy Ghost as both empowerment and sanctification. Simpson expressed his theology of sanctification in these terms: "complete, but not completed, perfect, but not perfected"40 Accordingly, he used the terms "baptism of the Holy Ghost" and "sanctification" interchangeably.41 Simpson also regarded the gift of tongues as one of the signs of the baptism in the Holy Spirit along with other gifts such as healing and prophecy but he disputed the assertion of Pentecostals that it was the necessary sign.42 As a result he attempted to distance the Alliance from Pentecostalism after 1907 but not without considerable loss to its membership.43 Although the Alliance was united by the Fourfold Gospel, other issues such as church government, doctrine and authority were unclarified.44 The very looseness of its organizational structure allowed

37 Ibid, pp 83, 100, 144-145.
39 Niklaus, Sawin, Stoesz, op.cit., pp 82-83.
41 Ibid, pp 110-117; Marsden, op.cit., pp 78-80.
42 Anderson, op.cit., pp 144-147; Niklaus, Sawin Stoesz, op.cit., p 114. On the gifts of the Spirit see for example, 1 Corinthians, chapters 12 & 13
44 Anderson, op.cit., pp 143-144.
members considerable freedom of belief and action, a weakness in terms of central control as was evident in the tongues controversy. 45

**The Parousia**

William E. Blackstone, the author of one of this century’s most popular books on dispensational premillennialism, *Jesus is Coming*, was an associate of A. B. Simpson. 46 Simpson was convinced that evangelization would herald in the Second Coming, and therefore world evangelism became of increasing concern to him. 47 His interest in evangelism was motivated not only by compassion for the unsaved and the dire consequences of eternal punishment which awaited them, but also by his zeal to hasten the coming of Christ. 48 As proponents of dispensationalism he and Blackstone were frequent speakers at both Bible and Prophecy Conferences throughout North America. 49 Pivotal to their prophetic schema was the role of Israel in world affairs. Blackstone was convinced that Israel was to play a crucial role in the Second Coming of Christ. 50

**Healing**

Simpson’s advocacy of divine healing as a cardinal tenet of the Gospel caused great controversy amongst some conservative evangelical groups. 51 His reading of the New Testament had given him no reason to assume that the Holy Spirit had withdrawn this gift from humanity. However experience taught him not to force the issue on those whom he described as "unready for strong meat". 52

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47 Ibid, p 73, 82-83.
48 Ibid, pp 73-75.
51 Niklaus, Sawin, Stoessz, op. cit., pp 42-43, 55.
52 Ibid, pp 55,68.
Healing was a blessing, he believed, given to those of sufficient faith. Those who did not believe were advised to seek more mundane medical help.\textsuperscript{53} Whether he intended to or not, Simpson presented divine healing as accessible only by those of spiritual superiority. Missionaries, for example, were not required to desist from seeking medical attention but they were left in no doubt that if they were truly consecrated, God would take care of their bodies as He did their souls.\textsuperscript{54}

As Simpson argued,

\textit{"The Lord Jesus has purchased and provided for His believing children physical strength, life and healing as freely as the spiritual blessings of the Gospel. We do not need the intervention of any man or woman as our priest, for He is our Great High Priest able to be touched with the feeling of our infirmities and it is still as true as ever, "As many as touched him were made perfectly whole."} \textsuperscript{55}

The Christian and Missionary Alliance sponsored faith missions. Believing God would take care of body and soul, the Alliance had faith that God would also provide all the resources necessary for evangelism.\textsuperscript{56} Indeed it taught that faith was the key to receiving abundant blessing from God.\textsuperscript{57} In 1892 the North Berar Faith Mission, which had been founded by Marcus and Jennie Fuller in 1882, joined the Christian and Missionary Alliance.\textsuperscript{58} Its property Akola became the headquarters of the Alliance in India and Marcus Fuller was appointed Chairman of the India Alliance.\textsuperscript{59}

In 1925 the Alliance, as requested by Ramabai in her will, undertook the trusteeship of The Ramabai Mukti Mission after the resignation of Miss Lissa

\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., p 88.
\textsuperscript{54} Ibid, p 88.
\textsuperscript{55} Ibid, pp 55-56.
\textsuperscript{56} Ibid, pp 80-81,91.
\textsuperscript{57} Ibid, pp 72-73.
\textsuperscript{58} Robert L. Niklaus To All Peoples p 83.
Hastie. In 1928 Mary Lucia Bierce Fuller, a former Alliance missionary and the daughter of Alliance missionaries, Jennie and Marcus Fuller, received a letter from Mr K. Garrison, Superintendent of the Alliance’s Missionary Training Institute at Nyack, New York, informing her that the American Auxiliary of The Ramabai Mukti Mission now had its own desk in one of the Alliance’s foreign offices in New York. Jennie Fuller had been chiefly responsible for introducing Ramabai to the Christian and Missionary Alliance. In 1922 shortly before her death, Ramabai committed her life’s work to the care of the Alliance. As Miss N. Phillips explained, The Christian and Missionary Alliance “stood for the same principles of faith” as Ramabai and had worked closely with her for a number of years. As we shall see Ramabai’s theology after her second conversion amply confirmed Miss Phillips’ observation.

During the 1890s, Ramabai developed an association with some of the leading revivalists of the day, such as Dr George Pentecost, the Baptist evangelist and close friend of A. B. Simpson and the Keswick revivalists, the Reverend Nelson Gregson and the Reverend William Haslam. Haslam and Pentecost were instrumental in Ramabai’s conversion to Evangelicalism, whilst Gregson facilitated her baptism of the Holy Spirit. Through her association with the Christian and Missionary Alliance Ramabai subsequently embraced dispensational premillennialism and faith healing. Likewise she developed a

60 Ramabai’s will provided for such a contingency. See The Last Will and Testament of Pandita Ramabai Dongre Meakhvi 7th March 1922, Mukti Archives.
61 Garrison to Lucia Fuller, March 15, 1928, Mukti Mission archives.
62 M. L. Fuller, Triumph of an Indian Widow p 41; Robert L. Niklaus, To All Peoples pp 82-83.
65 These individuals will be commented upon in due course.
66 M L. Fuller, Notebook pp 49-50, Mukti Archives; Ramabai, A Testimony, pp 43-44; Sister Geraldine, Letters and Correspondence, p 409. On the Alliance’s
literal and uncritical reading of scripture in marked contrast to her earlier position. Following her appearance at the Keswick Convention of 1898, Ramabai began to pray for revival in India. Bolstered by prayer circles established by Keswick members in India, including herself, Ramabai sought similar support from Australia and New Zealand for an Indian revival. Her association with Rueben A. Torrey through Minnie Abrams, a staff member at Mukti, led her to dispatch Minnie and Manoramabai to Australia in 1902. Torrey's tour of Australia had sparked rumours of a revival and Ramabai hoped to capitalize on the evident interest in faith missions in Australia and New Zealand by establishing Ramabai Circles to support her work in India and to pray for revival on the sub continent. A New edition of the High-Caste Hindu Woman, Pandita Ramabai: The Widows' Friend, with an introduction and

theology see Robert L. Niklaus, John S Sawin, Samuel J Stoessz All for Jesus; 67 Sister Geraldine, Letters and Correspondence pp 421-422; Ramabai, A Testimony pp 38-40. Ramabai's literalism was most evident in her references to the signs of the times and their impending fulfilment, for example see her reply (May 21, 1909) to the question concerning the supernatural basis of her work in J. Mott's questionnaire, "The Missionary Message in Relation to non-Christian Religions" World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh 1910; The Muki Prayer Bell May 1909 pp 2-3. On the principle of literalism in interpretation of scripture amongst premillennialists, except where the context absolutely demands otherwise, see Marsden, Fundamentalism and American Culture p 60; Timothy Weber, Living in the Shadow of the Second Coming p 42.

68 Ramabai "More Surprises" Muki Prayer Bell, October 1905, p 5ff
69 The Reverend R. J. Ward, a Keswick missionary in India circulated a publication entitled "Prayer Circle" containing spiritual requests and answers to prayer. He was in touch with Ramabai. See Helen Dyer, Revival in India: Years of the Right Hand of the Most High, Morgan & Scott, London 1907 p 29; Ramabai, "More Surprises" Muki Prayer Bell October 1905 p 8
supplement by Manoramabai was published in Melbourne (1902) to mark the tour.

In 1905-1906 the Ramabai Muki Mission experienced a revival of which much has been written.\textsuperscript{71} This event characterized Muki as a mission conducive to those of Holiness and Pentecostal persuasion. Miss Minnie Abrams, originally a worker with the Methodist Episcopal Church in Bombay, joined Muki in 1898.\textsuperscript{72} Prior to coming to India in 1887 Minnie was associated with R. A. Torrey in Minneapolis.\textsuperscript{73} A number of her writings proved influential in establishing the "Pentecostal" reputation of Muki such as her \textit{Baptism of the Holy Ghost and Fire} the second edition of which was published in 1906. Manoramabai’s testimony that she, along with many workers and students at Muki spoke in tongues also added to the Mission’s reputation.\textsuperscript{74} Consequently many of the applications from prospective candidates for missionary service at Muki offered as part of their credentials, testimony to their baptism of the Holy Ghost and Fire.\textsuperscript{75}

\textsuperscript{71} Apart from the various biographies of Ramabai which recount the Muki revival, Helen Dyer wrote a colourful narrative of the Indian revival entitled, \textit{Revival in India}.

\textsuperscript{72} The Muki Prayer Bell, March 1913 p 5.

\textsuperscript{73} Letter from R. A. Torrey to Manoramabai, April 23, 1919, \textit{Manoramabai Correspondence}, Muki Archives.

\textsuperscript{74} See Manoramabai’s letter to Miss Coley, June 3 1916, \textit{Manoramabai Correspondence} Muki Archives; Abrams, op.cit., pp 80-84. See also Miss Parsons’s account of her experiences with tongues in the \textit{Muki Prayer Bell}, April 1907 p 17 and Miss E. Hoffmann on faith healing, \textit{Muki Prayer Bell} April 1908 p 31.

\textsuperscript{75} See for example the letters from the following applicants: Miss Avis Phipps, October 1 1909; J. A. Coombes, April 11, 1909; J. A. Corbell Sept 20, 1910; Miss Gertrude Butler, February 8, 1911; Miss Lucy Wakeford, May 7, 1913; Mrs Ella Brubaker, June 18, 1915; Miss Mirfield Dirkensen, March 14, 1918; Mrs Anna Lewini, June 28, 1922, \textit{Manoramabai Correspondence}, Muki Archives.
Chapter 11: Crisis: The Sharada Sadan

In discussing Ramabai's two previous conversion experiences to the Brahmo Samaj and to high church Anglicanism, the prevalence of crisis as a recurring characteristic of her conversion contexts was noted. In the events leading up to her second Christian conversion and throughout the period covering that transition she endured a prolonged period of stress brightened only by intermittent periods of relief.1 Ramabai dated the beginning of this period as February 1890 and in 1892 she described prematurely in her report to the Ramabai Association, the events of 1891 as "The Last Great Storm." 2 That it was premature is confirmed by the Association's Annual Report of March 1894, in which it was recorded that such was the degree of stress Ramabai experienced in 1893 that it was as if another "storm" had been unleashed upon her.3 Sister Geraldine wrote that the strain Ramabai endured during these years "nearly killed her" 4 These reports confirm that Ramabai was moving from one crisis to another for a period of three years during which she was under severe strain. Throughout this period she was exploring new religious options and accordingly was reassessing her faith.

The eye of the storm was the Sharada Sadan, the residential school, which Ramabai established for the education of high-caste Hindu widows. The difficulties which arose concerning it were largely due to differing opinions over the nature of the school's "non-sectarianism" and the subsequent attempt of the

1 The Ramabai Association Annual Report, March 1893 p 15, referred to virulent attacks on Ramabai in the Indian and American newspapers during the previous 18 months.
4 Sister Geraldine, Letters and Correspondence p 298.
Poona Advisory Board to take full control of the institution. "Non-sectarian" was a term which was interpreted quite differently by the various groups and individuals interested in the school's management. At the same time, Ramabai's changing religious views proved critical to the perception of its religious neutrality. Public anger whipped up by B. G. Tilak in the Kesari and by disaffected employees of the Sharada Sadan periodically erupted throughout 1890-1893 as rumours spread of students being forced to attend Christian instruction and of impending conversions to Christianity in the school.5

The Sharada Sadan

Ramabai returned to India in 1889 after an absence of six years, anxious to establish her school for high-caste widows.6 The Ramabai Association had been formally established in Boston on May 28, 1887 and it had committed itself to supporting the Sharada Sadan for a period of ten years.7 The money was raised through the Ramabai Circles with each member pledged to give an annual donation of 1 dollar for ten years. As well as the Circles the Association created "Clusters", which only differed from the Circles in not being committed to the ten year time frame or pledged to a fixed amount.8 Circles were also later established in Canada, England, Australia and New Zealand. Apart from these,

6 Sister Eleanor to Sister Geraldine, February 6, 1889, Letters and Correspondence p 230
7 See the Articles of the Constitution of the Ramabai Association, Boston, 1887; Sister Geraldine, Letters and Correspondence pp 194-195.
8 A report in the Indu Prakash, 18th February 1889, stated that the Ramabai Association had raised 60,000 rupees and had an assured income of 15,000 Rs for ten years. Quoted in Sengupta, Pandita Ramabai Saraswati p 181.
various other bodies and individuals contributed to the Ramabai Association. F. Max Müller on more than one occasion sent Ramabai five pounds for her "happy home for widows".

The International Council of Women which met in Washington in 1888, The Woman’s Christian Temperance Union, The World’s Woman’s Christian Temperance Union and the Woman’s Missionary Movement provided Ramabai with an international platform from which to advertise her book, The High-Caste Hindu Woman and her proposed plans for the amelioration of her country women. The success of the campaign promoting the publication of the High-Caste Hindu Woman can be gauged from a perusal of The High-Caste Hindu Woman Scrapbook in the Muki Archives.

American women had taught Ramabai how to organize and how to promote her work and herself. They also firmly encouraged her to take charge

9 Some associations mentioned in reports were The Circles of King’s Daughters, Mission Circles and Sunday school scholars. Miss Grainger’s Report, The Ramabai Association Annual Report March 11, 1891 pp 5-10.
10 The Ramabai Association Annual Report, March 11, 1890 pp 29-30.
12 The promotion tour arranged for Ramabai in conjunction with the publication of The High-Caste Hindu Woman demonstrated the experience of women involved in American social reform movements in establishing organizations and generating publicity. Frances Willard, as her biographer. Ruth Bordin has aptly demonstrated was a prime example. It was largely due to Willard, whose roles included President of the W. C. T. U and Vice-President of the Ramabai Association, that Ramabai received considerable publicity and therefore interest.
of the Sharada Sadan and not to seek for an alternative head as Dorothea Beale had once proposed.13

The establishment of the Sharada Sadan was never without its difficulties. The school was originally established in Bombay but the expenses incurred in the first year hastened the decision to move it to Poona.14 The fervent nationalism and Hindu revivalism which characterized Poona during the 1890s contributed significantly to Ramabai's difficulties with her Advisory Board.15 The fear of Western erosion of Hindu religion, tradition and custom and of a probable loss of cultural identity was articulated forcibly by Tilak throughout these years.16 The creation of regional festivals surrounding deities such as the Elephant God, Ganesh, and the Maharashtrian hero, Shivaji, fostered a climate of suspicion and antagonism towards both Muslims and Christians.17

in her work. See The Ramabai Association Annual Report March 11, 1891 p 32. The High-Caste Hindu Woman Scrapbook contains reviews from many of the leading secular and religious publications of the day. For examples of the way in which Ramabai was advised and guided during this period see the following letters: Phebe Adams to Ramabai, April 19, June "undated", June, 27 & 29th 1887; Miss Grainger's letter to Ramabai, April 6, 1887 from the American Correspondence, Mukti Archives. Also Ramabai's letter to Geraldine, December 7, 1887, Letters and Correspondence. pp 204-205.
13 Miss Grainger to Ramabai, April 6, 1887, American Correspondence, Mukti Archives; Dorothea Beale to Sister Geraldine, May 24, 1885 Letters and Correspondence p 56.
14 Ramabai to Geraldine, November 9 1890, Letters and Correspondence pp 259-260.
15 On the political volatility of Poona and Bombay during the 1890s see Richard J Cashman, The Myth of Lokamanya: Tilak and Mass Politics in Maharashtra, University of California, Berkeley, 1975.
16 Tilak's opposition to the The Age of Consent Bill in 1891 was a prime example of his use of conservative forces to harness opposition to "foreign" influence in Hindu traditions. See Cashman, op.cit., pp 52-53, 62; J. R. Shinde, Dynamics of Cultural Revolution: 19th Century Maharashtra, Ajanta Publications Delhi, 1985, pp 36, 38-41.
17 Cashman, op.cit., pp 75ff, 90-93; Sharpe, Not to Destroy but to Fulfil pp 153-154.
Tilak’s criticism of the supposed religious neutrality of the Sharada Sadan had as its context the political turmoil of Poona, including his own ambition to achieve a reputation as a demagogue. Amongst his political opponents was Ramabai. She was a delegate to both the 5th Indian National Congress and the Social Conference in 1889. She spoke on two resolutions at the Congress: one concerning widow remarriage and the other concerning the disfigurement of widows. She spoke in favour of the first and against the second. In 1891 in opposition to Tilak, she organized a number of students of the Sharada Sadan to petition the British Government in favour of the Age of Consent Act. Ramabai’s involvement in Maharashtrian politics may well have contributed to her difficulties with Tilak as well as the more conservative members of the Advisory Board. As we shall see, it was during the intensity of social feeling aroused by the Age of Consent Act that Ramabai’s power and influence at the Sharada Sadan was severely curtailed. Consequently Tilak’s criticisms of Ramabai need to viewed not only within the context of her conversion to Christianity but also within the context of her political activism. Initially he was able to fuel public antagonism towards the school by giving public credence to the tales of disgruntled employees of the Sharada Sadan. But as we shall see he was on firmer ground when Miss Sarah Dix Hamlin, the representative of the Ramabai Association, provided substance to his suspicions.

The Poona and Bombay Advisory Boards were comprised of men well

18 See The Report of the Fifth Indian National Congress held at Bombay on the 26th, 27th, 28th December 1889 pp ix, 27.
20 The Ramabai Association Annual Report, March 1892 pp 24-25.
22 Tahanmarkar, Lokamanya Tilak p 44.
23 See Ramabai’s letters to an unknown American correspondent, September 15 & 16 1891, Letters and Correspondence pp 263ff.
known for their commitment to social reform. These included Dr Ramakrishna G. Bhandarkar, Rao Bahadur, Judge M. G. Ranade, Rao Sahab Deshmukh, the Hon Justice Kashinath Trimbak Telang, Mr. M. G. Chandavarkar, Dr S. V. Kane and Mr S. P. Kelkar. 24 The endorsement of the Sharada Sadan by these men and their consent to act as Advisory Boards to Ramabai was continually undermined by Tilak in the pages of the Kesari and Mahbatta. 25 Nor was Ramabai able to count on any great support from the Christian community. There was a small number of loyal friends but as the community was predominantly evangelical Ramabai’s rejection of the deity of Christ and her refusal to align herself with any particular tradition created suspicion that she was not truly converted. Her association with the CSMV had also undermined her reputation in evangelical eyes. 26 It was not until Ramabai’s reported “conversion” under Dr Pentecost’s ministry in 1891 that the situation with the evangelical community considerably improved. 27

Prior to her return to India and indeed for the first few years of the Sharada Sadan, Ramabai was very influenced by the notion of Christianity as the fulfilment of Hinduism, an idea which was gaining a degree of currency within liberal circles in India and the West. 28 She consistently argued that

24 For a full list see The Ramabai Association Annual Reports 1889, 1890.
25 D. V. Tahmankar, op.cit., p 44; T. V. Parvate, Bai Ganapadhar Tilak p 43; MacNicol, Pandita Ramabai p 76; Sengupta, Pandita Ramabai Saraswati pp 140, 203.
26 Ramabai to Dorothea Beale, 30th May 1889, Letters and Correspondence, p 185; The Ramabai Association Annual Report 11th March 1890, p 26; Achav, Pandita Ramabai pp 182-189.
27 Ramabai denied she had been converted by Pentecost. See Ramabai’s letter to Dr Pentecost reprinted in "The Christian Patriot" 15th December 1892 Donore Scrapbook, pp 4-5. The turnabout in evangelical opinion can be seen in the editorial comment in the "Christian Patriot" following Ramabai’s letter to the Editor, 26th December 1892, Donore Scrapbook pp 5-6. See also, "The Sharada Sadan in a home of its own", "Bombay Guardian", July 30, 1891, Donore Scrapbook p 2.
28 The fulfilment school found its greatest advocate in J. N. Farguhar, but the concept had been earlier expressed by Sir Monier Monier Williams. F Max Müller
missionaries would do well to build upon those aspects of Hinduism conducive to Christian thought instead of condemning the entire religion as irredeemable.29 Her decision upon her return to India to work with the Hindu reform movement in Maharashtra and to consent to Puranas in Hindu places of worship was in part influenced by the "fulfilment" idea. Unfortunately it was behaviour which was not conducive to securing evangelical support as she subsequently learned.30 But as her religious views changed and she began to lean towards Evangelicalism it became clear that she could no longer rely on support from the Brahmos, particularly as, from their point of view, she began to evangelize the students of the Sharada Sadan in a flagrant breach of the school's policy.31 It was an action which resulted in a crisis for the school and the subsequent resignation of Ramabai. To understand the nature of the crisis and the bearing it had on Ramabai's changing religious views, it is necessary to examine the school's policy.

A Non-Sectarian School.

The Sharada Sadan had been established as a non-sectarian school for the education of high-caste Hindu widows.32 As Ramabai was careful to explain to enthusiastic evangelicals such as Dr G. Pentecost, high-caste Hindus would not place their relatives in Christian institutions for fear of exposing them to proselytization.33 Opinions however were divided over the meaning of "non-sectarian" by those involved with the school. Whilst it was generally agreed

had also espoused a similar view. See Sharpe, Not To Destroy But To Fulfil pp 50-59
29 Ramabai, "Indian Religion" C.I.C.M., No 13, Spring, 1886 pp 106-118.
30 Adhav, Pandita Ramabai pp 187-189.
33 for example see Ramabai's letter to Dr G. Pentecost in The Christian Patriot" 15th December 1892, R. K. Dongre Scrapbook p 5.
by all parties that "non-sectarian" excluded religious instruction in the school, it had been similarly agreed that "non-sectarian" carried with it the idea of religious impartiality or "neutrality" in its administration. Both aspects of "non-sectarian", that is, non-religious instruction and religious neutrality, were interpreted a little differently by the factions involved with the school. For prominent members of the Brahmin community such as B. G. Tilak, who it has been claimed, originally enlisted as a "sympathizer" of the school, "non-sectarian" meant that no Hindu student would receive instruction in Christianity either in or out of school hours, whether they were of age to decide for themselves or even if they had parental permission. In addition it meant that any sign of interest in Christianity on the part of students would be actively discouraged. This was the position which came to be adopted by the Bombay and Poona Advisory Boards, whose numbers in 1890 were increased and stacked with conservative members. After the removal of the school to Poona from Bombay, the Poona Advisory Board informed students and teachers, including Ramabai, that it would not countenance any change in a student’s religion, and in the light of any such development she would be asked to leave the school. "Non-sectarian" by this definition meant positive reinforcement of Hindu cultural and religious values. In fact Ramabai complained that far from practising religious neutrality or "non-sectarianism", the Board was using the school to actively reinforce

35 Tilak continually warned Ranade and Bhandarkar that the Sharada Sadan was being used to proselytize students. See Tahmankar, op.cit., pp 44-45; Sengupta, op.cit., p 204. On Tilak’s initial "sympathy" with the aims of the Sharada Sadan see Parvate, op.cit., p 43. For an alternative view, see James Kellock, Mahadev Govind Ranade p 103.
36 Ramabai to an American Correspondent, September 15, 1891; September 16, 1891, Letters and Correspondence pp 264-273.
37 Note the case of Lakshmibai recounted by Ramabai in her letter to an unnamed American correspondent, September 15, 1891, Letters and Correspondence p 266-268.
Hinduism. In an attempt to circumvent Christian influence, Tilak also publicly criticized Ramabai's decision to employ only Christian teachers in the Sharada Sadan. He was under no illusions concerning Western education and was well aware of the impact its values could have on the traditional life of Hindu women. Undoubtedly he viewed Ramabai's organization of a student petition in support of the Age of Consent Bill as a grim example of such foreign influence.

For others, including many American supporters of the Sharada Sadan, "non-sectarian" simply meant that only secular subjects would be taught in the school but that adequate provision would be made for Hindu students to maintain their caste and practise their faith. This was the original interpretation of "non-sectarian" which had been accepted by the Bombay Advisory Board until the arrival of Sarah Hamlin. In February 1890 the Bombay Advisory Board had issued a resolution stating that provision would be made for students wishing to study Christianity, provided they had parental permission and that they received instruction outside the school grounds. This resolution was passed to regularize Ramabai's practice of sending widows who showed an interest in Christianity to a zenana missionary on Saturdays for

38 Ramabai to an unnamed American Correspondent September 16, Letters and Correspondence pp 271-272.
40 On the diffusion of Christian ideas and values through educational institutions see Sharpe, Not To Destroy But To Fulfill pp 94-96. Sharpe also claims that Tilak was less influenced by his Western education than other nationalist leaders, pp 153-154.
41 Shinde, Dynamics of Cultural Revolution p 36.
42 Article 2, The Constitution of The Ramabai Association; The Christian Union, New York, August 18, 1887. See also Ramabai's letter to Dr Donald, President of the American Ramabai Association, September 13, 1902, Mukti Archives.
43 See Ramabai's letter to an unnamed American Correspondent, September 15, 1890, Letters and Correspondence pp 266.
religious instruction. It was later rescinded by both the Bombay and Poona Advisory Boards. Tilak’s castigation of the reformers as “traitors” to their faith and culture because of their support for issues such as the Age of Consent Act had borne fruit. In its letter of resignation, the Poona Board charged Ramabai with violating the school’s religious “neutrality” by direct attempts to evangelise students. It was a charge Ramabai rejected and the Ramabai Association subsequently upheld the Bombay Board’s 1890 resolution in her defence.

However, the Executive Council of the Ramabai Association very clearly believed that the intellectual and moral uplift of Hindu women could not be accomplished without reference to Christian moral and ethical values but it could and must preclude Christian evangelism. “Evangelism” for the Executive meant blatant proselytization or even the perception of it. Such a development would have changed the character of the Sharada Sadan from a "non-sectarian" institution into a mission school involving the Ramabai Association in a breach of faith with the people of Poona. However the Sharada Sadan was undoubtedly regarded by the Association’s Executive and indeed its membership, as an educational venture in which “Christian influence” would lay a strong foundation for future evangelism. Such influence however had to be “indirect” and

44 See Ramabai’s letter to Sister Geraldine, June 21 1889; Ramabai to an unnamed American Correspondent, Sept 15, 1891, Letters and Correspondence pp 247, 266; The Ramabai Association Annual Report, March 12, 1894, p 14.
45 Ramabai to an unnamed American Correspondent, Sept 15, 1891, Letters and Correspondence p 267.
51 "Pundita Ramabai and her Great Plans" Central and New Jersey Times, July 14, 1887; "The Pundita Ramabai" Inter-Ocean, Chicago, December 10, 1887, High Caste Hindu Woman Scrapbook: Address by Mr Hazen of Vermont, The Ramabai Association, Annual Report, March 11, 1890 p 9; The Christian Union, New York,
attributable solely to the pervasive power of Christian ideals and values. Any interest shown in Christianity as a result of "indirect" influence could not be charged as a breach of faith as it was undeniably an act of God. Mano's missionary activities amongst the students were, due to her youth, viewed in that category, but they also produced the first attack on the school by the Kesaris. 52

A further meaning of "non-sectarian" was less passive in its interpretation. This was the view held by Pandita Ramabai and it was one which was diametrically opposed to the Poona Advisory Board's 1891 interpretation. She described the Sharada Sadan as an institution whose administration did not favour either of the two faiths privately being practised within its walls; rather it recognized the right of both to co-exist. 53 The school was therefore "non-sectarian," that is, "impartial" or "neutral" in its administration, which was further accentuated by the absence of religious education from the curriculum. 54 Unlike the Advisory Boards' definition of "non-sectarian," which essentially meant the reinforcement of Hinduism within the school, Ramabai interpreted "non-sectarian" as the mutual co-existence of Christianity and Hinduism. She went further, reminding her critics that she had established the Sadana on the principle of religious freedom. 55 Everyone at the school, including herself, was

August 18, 1897. See also Sharpe, Not To Destroy But To Fulfil pp 82-85 on the role of influence in educational institutions in India.
52 Takmankar, op.cit., p 44; Mano to Sister Geraldine, July 21, 1889, Notebooks of Geraldine, Book 7; Sister Eleanor to Sister Geraldine, August 19, 1889; Ramabai to Sister Geraldine, June 21, 1889, Letters and Correspondence pp 239-240, 247.
53 Ramabai to an unnamed American Correspondent, September 15, 1891, Letters and Correspondence pp 254; Ramabai to E Winchester Donald, September 13, 1902, Multi Archives.
54 Ramabai, Letter to an American Correspondent, September 16, 1891 Letters and Correspondence pp 271-272; Ramabai to Dr E Winchester Donald, September 13, 1902, Multi Archives.
free to practise her faith. She argued, was a deeply religious institution and that she had made adequate provision for everyone to practise their respective faiths in it, including herself. Therefore, she concluded, it was absurd to equate "non-sectarian" with "non-religious" as some were apparently doing. And in this she had been consistent. She had made it clear in her early press interviews that the Bible and the Puranas would be displayed in her school along with the opportunity for girls to choose whatever faith they wished to follow. However, Ramabai's decision to place within easy reach of her students the religious literature of competing traditions had less to do with a student's right to choose than with her faith in Christianity as a source of irresistible comfort to oppressed womanhood.

Whilst Ramabai assured everyone that the school would not be used for the purpose of proselytizing women to Christianity, she herself firmly believed in the powerful and pervasive influence of Christianity. The teachers at the school were all required to be Christian and she specifically sought women committed to the Temperance cause. In her 1887 interview with the Chicago Inter-Ocean she said,

"But if I can get them under the influence of my school (ie the high-caste widows) leaving them free and untrammeled, placing the Bible in the hands of every pupil and having Christian literature in the library and Christian women as teachers, some of whom I hope will be sent out by the W.C.T.U., I am confident that the influences round them will gently win them to see the beauty of Christianity."

56 Ramabai to an unnamed American Correspondent, September 15, 1891, Letters and Correspondence, p 264; Ramabai to Dr E. Winchester Donald, September 13, 1902, Mukti Archives.
57 Ramabai to Dr E. Winchester Donald, September 13, 1902, Mukti Archives.
58 Ramabai to Dr E Winchester Donald, September 13, 1902, Mukti Archives.
59 "The Pundita Ramabai" Inter-Ocean, Chicago, December 10, 1887; Ramabai, "The Hindoo Marriage Law", Letters to the Editor, The Times, September 27, 1887.
60 Inter-Ocean, Chicago, December 10, 1887.
61 Ibid.
62 Ibid.
Influence

Christian Influence had always been an important component of Ramabai's strategy for the amelioration of her students.\(^{63}\) Ramabai's faith in it was demonstrated by her resolve to hold morning prayer and devotion in her private rooms with an open invitation (signified by an open door), to any student to join her and Manoramabai. Any student who did, acted of her own free will. Consequently it was an action attributable to "indirect influence", although the Ramabai Association warned Ramabai in 1890 such actions might be misconstrued by others.\(^{64}\) As the school was founded upon religious liberty and furthermore was also a home, her home, Ramabai believed that she and her daughter were free to practise their own religion within its walls.\(^{65}\) The National Indian Association which had promoted Ramabai's *High-Caste Hindu Woman* and which had initially supported the idea of the Sharada Sadan, began to have its doubts about the non-sectarian nature of the school before it was even established.\(^{66}\) It also shared Ramabai's faith in influence and was anxious lest any conversions resulted from it. Consequently it appealed to Ramabai to minimize Christian influence in the school. It was a request which was dismissed by her in 1888 as naive.\(^{67}\)

In providing a refuge for high-caste widows, Ramabai accepted a class of women for whom Hindu society had little use. Whilst some came with parental

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64 *Ramabai Association Annual Report*, March 1890 p 27.
65 Ramabai to Dr E. Winchester Donald, September 13, 1902.
permission, others with horrific experiences to relate fled to the Sharada Sadan.\textsuperscript{68} Almost all were vulnerable given the lives of expiation they were expected to live. Ramabai welcomed these women with kindness and attention. They were encouraged to regard themselves as lovable and their lives as useful, even valuable. In the Sharada Sadan they were no longer omens of ill fortune and therefore during festive occasions, they were not, as was customary, confined to the inaccessible quarters of the house.\textsuperscript{69} It is little wonder that to many of these girls Ramabai appeared to be the goddess, Saraswati Devi.\textsuperscript{70} Consequently, her open invitation to these women and girls to join her inner circle must be evaluated within a context of power, vulnerability and gratitude. The Christian Patriot was only too aware of the ease with which such women could be exploited and it expressed concern for their vulnerability.\textsuperscript{71}

But from the beginning Ramabai encouraged the formation of a privileged group, an inner circle of students whose membership was conducive to their positive response to Christianity. It is a testimony to the extraordinary power and resilience of Hinduism that amongst these women, who constituted some of the most oppressed women in Hindu society, that whilst interest in Christianity was evident, conversion was not epidemic.\textsuperscript{72}

In 1890 the Ramabai Association sent Miss Sarah Dix Hamlin of the

\textsuperscript{68} There are many examples recounted in the various biographies as well as the correspondence of Pandita Ramabai. A typical case was that of Tara whose story is related in Ramabai's letters to Geraldine, Letters and Correspondence pp 291ff,

\textsuperscript{69} Ramabai Ranade visited the Sharada Sadan on the occasion of the Divali festival bringing gifts, in spite of accusations that Ramabai was using the school for proselytizing purposes. See Ramabai's letter to Sister Geraldine, Letters and Correspondence, December 4, 1891, pp 275-277. See also, Mrs Marcus Fuller, The Wrongs of Indian Womanhood pp 170-171.

\textsuperscript{70} M. Lucia Fuller's Notebook p 62.

\textsuperscript{71} "Pundita Ramabai and Her Work" The Christian Patriot, January 5, 1893.

\textsuperscript{72} The first baptisms did not occur until 1894. See Sister Geraldine, Letters and Correspondence p 320; Sengupta, op.cit., p 216. An earlier one, the baptism of Oomatibai, a Gujarati widow had taken place after she had left the Sharada Sadan. See Sister Geraldine, Letters and Correspondence p 297.
Executive Committee of the Ramabai Association to assist Ramabai in the establishment of the Sharada Sadan. The Association was concerned about Ramabai's inexperience in business matters. Sarah Hamlin was described as "a woman of cultivation and refinement", "of experience in teaching, organizing and travelling." Miss Hamlin's brief was to establish the school on a thoroughly business basis; to represent the Association in India and to act as advisor to Ramabai. By the time Miss Hamlin had completed her task, the school was in the hands of conservative elements in Poona and Ramabai had offered her resignation.

It was Ramabai's opinion that Miss Hamlin succumbed to the flattery of orthodox Hindus. Certainly Sarah Hamlin was of the opinion that she knew better than Ramabai how to organize an institution. Most importantly, she believed she knew how to achieve lasting reforms - slowly by a policy of compromise and accommodation. Events proved otherwise. The Brahmins of Maharashtra were much more politically astute than Sarah Hamlin and under her authority they acquired significant modifications to Ramabai's original conception of the Sharada Sadan as an institution of religious neutrality and freedom. Either Miss Hamlin lacked foresight or she was motivated by personal resentment of Ramabai. Whatever the reason, her decision to publicly criticize Ramabai before the Bombay Advisory Board for inviting

73 The Ramabai Association Annual Report, March 1890, pp 22-23.
74 Ibid.
75 Ramabai to Sister Geraldine, December 4, 1891, Letters and Correspondence p 278; The Ramabai Association Annual Report, March 1892 p 15.
76 Ramabai to an unnamed American Correspondent, Sept 15, 1891, Letters and Correspondence p 167.
77 Miss Hamlin to Sister Geraldine, August 17, 1890, Letters and Correspondence p 257.
78 Ramabai to an unnamed American Correspondent, September 15, 1891; September 16, 1891 Letters and Correspondence pp 257-273.
79 See her criticism of Ramabai to Geraldine in respect of Mano. Miss Hamlin to Sister Geraldine, August 17, 1890 Letters and Correspondence p 256-257.
students to join her at prayer led to serious repercussions for the school. Miss Hamlin further suggested to the Board that Ramabai's actions were an effective form of proselytizing and a breach of the school's policy of secularity. 80 Needless to say Ramabai was asked to cease immediately, and under Miss Hamlin's guidance, resolutions were passed both in Bombay and Poona which increasingly limited Ramabai's power. By the time the school was established in Poona, Ramabai's vote on the Board was limited to one in twelve. 81 The Poona Board also rescinded the Bombay Board's resolution permitting students to receive instruction in Christianity outside school grounds. Likewise it secured the removal from the school of a student who had been under Christian instruction privately in accordance with the wishes of her parents. 82

From 1891 the Poona Advisory Board ceased to act in an advisory capacity altogether and became a managing board. 83 For seven months the Board determined the student intake at the school. It also threatened to withdraw its endorsement of the school unless it was given control over funding as well as the power to appoint teachers. 84 Ramabai tendered her resignation. 85 The Association upon learning of the events of 1890-1891 rejected the terms

80 Ramabai to an unnamed American Correspondent, September 15, 1891, Letters and Correspondence, p 259. See also Miss Hamlin's letter to the Ramabai Association, Annual Report 1890, pp 27-28.
81 Ramabai to an unnamed American Correspondent, September 15, 1891 Letters and Correspondence p 266-267; Ramabai Association Annual Report 1892, pp 13-14.
82 Ramabai to an unnamed American Correspondent, Letters and Correspondence pp 266-268.
83 The original task of the board was to audit the accounts of the Sharada Sadan and advise Ramabai on financial matters. See Ramabai's letter to an unnamed American Correspondent, September 16, 1891, Letters and Correspondence pp 272-273.
84 Ramabai Association Annual Report, March 1892 p 14; Ramabai to an unnamed American Correspondent, September 16, 1891, Letters and Correspondence, p 271.
85 Ramabai to an unnamed American Correspondent, Sept 16, 1891, Letters and Correspondence, p 272.
and indeed the authority of the Managing Board. The Association accepted Ramabai’s assurance that no student had been compelled to attend her devotions and that any interest shown in Christianity by students was the result of indirect influence. In late 1891 it dissolved the Board and reinstated Ramabai’s authority as well as the Bombay Advisory Board’s 1890 resolution.

The Quiet Day

In 1893 Ramabai stretched the concept of “non-sectarianism” in the Sharada Sadan to breaking point. In an incident illustrating her changing religious views, she and her new assistant, Sunderbai Power, a Methodist evangelist, offered the students of the Sharada Sadan a choice between a day away with the school or a private day of Christian devotions at the school. The offer was made during the school vacation, presumably to circumvent any possible accusations of religious instruction taking place during school hours. Twenty five students chose to stay behind and by the end of the “Quiet Day”, fifteen had declared their faith in Christ. The result was the formation of a Christian Endeavour Society in the school.

Sharada Gadre

Sharada Gadre, the daughter of Ramabai’s clerk, had also been attending Ramabai’s devotions and during a stay in hospital had received regular visitations by a missionary. On Ramabai’s advice, Sharada declared to her parents her faith in Christ. As a result, Mr Gadre withdrew his daughter

86 Ramabai to Geraldine December 4, 1891, Letters and Correspondence p 278; Ramabai Association Annual Report, March 1892, p 10ff.
87 Ibid, 1890 p 27.
88 Ibid, 1892, pp 13ff.
89 Ramabai to Geraldine, June 28, 1893, Letters and Correspondence pp 302-303.
90 Ramabai to Sister Geraldine, June 28, 1893, Letters and Correspondence p 303.
91 Ramabai to Geraldine, June 28, 1893, Letters and Correspondence p 303.
92 Sister Geraldine, Letters and Correspondence pp 299.
93 Ramabai to Sister Geraldine, June 28, Letters and Correspondence pp 303-304.
from the school. But Ramabai, as Gadre’s employer, exerted her influence to achieve the return of Sharada to the Sharada Sadan. In securing Mr. Gadre’s permission for Sharada to continue at the school and to attend Christian devotions, Ramabai very clearly in Gadre’s eyes preyed on his situation as her employee. It was an act he resented and when the incident of the Quiet Day came to his attention, he supplied to Ranade, Bhandarkar and Bhat (who had continued to act informally as an Advisory Board), a list of parents and guardians whose children attended the school. This list was used by the Brahmós to inform parents and guardians that the school had abandoned its policy of religious neutrality. The result was mass withdrawal from the school along with the public disassociation of it by Ranade, Bhandarkar and Bhat. During these events it came to light that the above gentlemen had been assuring parents and guardians for over a year that the Sharada Sadan was still being administered as a Hindu school. The Quiet Day proved otherwise, and in the wake of the public uproar which followed it became a matter of considerable embarrassment to them. The Ramabai Association defended Ramabai. It claimed that far from abandoning the school’s policy of neutrality she had only returned to the old policy of religious freedom upon which the school had been founded.

Ramabai’s creation of an inner circle of students who attended her private devotions was a deliberate evangelistic strategy which lent credence to

94 Ramabai to Geraldine, June 28, Letters and Correspondence p 303-304
95 Ramabai to Sister Geraldine, Letters and Correspondence pp 305-307.
96 Ramabai to Sister Geraldine, August 10, Letters and Correspondence, p 308.
97 Ramabai’s staff were divided in their support of Ramabai regarding the events of the Quiet Day. See Miller, Pandita Ramabai p 54.
98 The Board members had attempted unsuccessfully to persuade Ramabai to abandon her definition of "non-sectarian" in favour of that established by the Poona Board of 1891. Sister Geraldine, Letters and Correspondence pp 296-297.
99 The text of the Advisory’s Board’s resignation was published in the Christian Patriot, 13 August 1893; Ramabai Association Annual Report, March 1894 pp 16-17.
100 Ramabai Association Annual Report, March, 1895 pp 19-20 ff.
accusations that she exploited the vulnerability of many of these women and girls. Her association with Sunderbai Power, who demonstrated very little commitment to the Sharada Sadan's policy of "non sectarianism," likewise compromised her with the people of Poona and brought the school into disrepute. In the eyes of many, Ramabai had acted deceitfully. The establishment of a Christian prayer group and an Endeavour society with connections to the Methodist church confirmed long held suspicions about the school. The subsequent history of the Sharada Sadan continued to demonstrate Ramabai's growing commitment to evangelism and her inability to maintain the original character of the institution. In 1902 the Sadana was formally reconstituted as a Christian school by the American Ramabai Association.

102 Ramabai's "Indirect influence" was defended by the Indian Magazine and Review, April 1894, pp 201-202, on the grounds that her strong personality and fervent faith could not fail to attract others to her. The Review also added that the parents and guardians of the students ought to have realized that possibility from the beginning. Quoted in Dennis, Christian Missions and Social Progress pp 245.

103 Sister Geraldine, Letters and Correspondence p 299; Ramabai to Geraldine, December 11, 1893, Letters and Correspondence pp 308-309. See also The Ramabai Association Annual Report, March 1897 pp 3ff.

104 Ibid.


Ramabai was in a state of spiritual dissatisfaction in 1891 when she chanced upon a book by William Haslam entitled, From Death Unto Life: Or Twenty Years of My Ministry. The book recounted Haslam's conversion from high Anglicanism to Evangelicalism. Its message was that true religion is accompanied by ecstatic experiences testifying to the presence and power of God; its context, Cornish revivalism, which Haslam described as particularly exuberant. He wrote,

"I have seldom read of any remarkable manifestations in revivals the counterpart of which I did not witness in that room, and I saw some things there which I have never heard of taking place elsewhere."

"Cornish revivals were things in themselves. I have read of such stirring movements occurring occasionally in different places elsewhere, but in Cornwall they were frequent."

Haslam depicted visions, prophecy, speaking in tongues, divine healing and the casting out of demons as the day to day experiences of truly converted and sanctified Christians. Conversion, Haslam inferred, was an emotional experience in which the time, the date and the occasion were forever burned in one's memory. It was the result of true heart felt repentance in which cries of agony over sin were replaced by exultation and joy. For this reason he could not believe that anyone could attain true salvation in the Church of Rome, nor for the matter in the high Church of England. His emphasis on "true Bible teaching" in the conservative evangelical tradition gave him cause to view other traditions with suspicion.

5 Ibid, pp 70-78, 90-92.
Sanctification, Haslam described as a second blessing in the Keswick tradition of both empowerment and of increased holiness. He described the discovery of sanctification and premillennialism as the turning points in his ministry. For many in search of deeper spiritual experiences and increased holiness, "sanctification" became an all inclusive word for the attainment of a "higher spirituality" or "practical holiness" which could bring them into a closer relationship with God. An analogy which was commonly used to describe the state of being sanctified and which carried biblical authority was that of the branch and vine. God was likened to the vine and the sanctified believer to the branch. The believer drew strength from the vine to produce fruit. Therefore, having fully surrendered mind and body to God, nothing else was required of the believer except faith. As a result, sanctification was sometimes referred to as "resting in the Lord," for having completely surrendered oneself to God, the believer was to consider him or herself simply a conduit of the divine will and power.

After Haslam's licence was withdrawn by the bishop for disseminating Nonconformist views he became a free lance preacher and revivalist. In 1874 he was a speaker at the great London Mission. He was also a regular speaker at the Keswick Convention and at the Broadlands Conferences. These conferences were convened to discuss issues associated with "the higher Christian life." The dissatisfaction with nominal Christianity and the search for deeper experiences of God brought many Christians together from otherwise

7 Ibid, pp 227–234.
8 Ibid, p 168.
9 Ibid, pp 168,176.
12 Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, p 79.
diverse points of view. Conferences and missions, quiet days and retreats, fostered the search for a deeper union with God, the proof of which lay in an increased demonstration of divine power in the life of the believer. Whether that power was demonstrated as answers to prayer, a call to a life of service, an increased sense of power over sin, or whether it manifested itself through more dramatic forms such as visions or faith healing, the immediate result for the believer was emotional satisfaction and confirmation that he or she was in touch with God.

In 1890 Haslam was one of many missionaries to conduct revivalist meetings in India. George Grubb from the Keswick Convention and Dr George Pentecost were also in India during that period. Lucia Fuller verified Ramabai’s attendance at Haslam’s meetings but was sparse on detail. After attending his meetings and reading his book, Ramabai came to believe that Haslam had the answer to her spiritual malaise, which was that she lacked the experience of sanctification. She admitted that during this time she was overwhelmed with events at the Sharada Sadan and in search of a deeper experience of God. Added to her malaise was a sense of spiritual isolation. The pressures associated with the Sharada Sadan had increased her sense of isolation and as we noted at Wantage, she was often ill as a result of nervous tension and stress. Nor could she look to any particular religious group for support. Appasamy observed that bhaktas have little or no tradition of the solitary devotee, that their faith flourishes communally. And whilst no doubt there

18 Ibid, p 504.
19 Ibid, pp 501-505; Richter, A History of Missions in India p 342.
20 M. L. Fuller, Triumph of an Indian Widow p 41.
22 Ramabai’s letter to Dr Pentecost, Christian Patriot, week following 26th December 1892, Donare Scrapbook pp 6-7.
23 Sister Geraldine, Letters and Correspondence p 298.
would be exceptions to such generalizations, it appears to be a valid observation in Ramabai's case. Max Müller had made a comment that her acceptance of baptism at Wantage was to some extent motivated by her desire to be part of a community. Haslam may have further aided Ramabai's second conversion by his repudiation of high-Church Anglicanism as an unsuitable religious context in which to experience either conversion or sanctification. It would have reassured Ramabai that her decision to leave Anglicanism had been correct. Likewise his discovery of religious satisfaction within the Holiness Movement would have significantly contributed to her consideration of that tradition as a new religious context. All the evidence suggests that Ramabai was ready to make some type of religious change during this period if the opportunity arose. The discovery of From Death Unto Life, was a significant factor in the creation of that opportunity.

Ramabai's recollection of her second conversion in A Testimony, retrospectively conflated and unified a number of events between 1891 and 1906. At the time of writing her conversion to the holiness tradition was complete and A Testimony exhibits the linguistic milieu of that movement. It is punctuated by biblical quotes and warnings against reading books about the Bible instead of placing one's faith in the Bible itself. Only the Bible, Ramabai argued, had proved to be a reliable and trustworthy guide. She described the differences between her two conversions as the difference between finding Christ and finding His religion. Her baptism at Wantage represented the latter and her

26 Ramabai, A Testimony p 28.
baptism in the Holy Spirit, which she described as "unconditional surrender," was the former.\textsuperscript{31} Therefore by the time she wrote \textit{A Testimony} she had concluded that her first conversion had been inadequate and her soul "unregenerate" until her second conversion.\textsuperscript{32} Continuing the theme of her salvation, in accordance with holiness theology, she indicated that she had had no experience of the Holy Spirit and no sense of intimate communion with God prior to her second conversion.\textsuperscript{33} In addition she confessed she knew little about substitutionary atonement, sanctification, eternal judgement and the second coming.\textsuperscript{34} She commended William Haslam, George Pentecost and Nelson Gregson for facilitating her experiences of conversion and sanctification.\textsuperscript{35}

William Haslam's \textit{From Death Unto Life}, identified the causes and the remedy for Ramabai's spiritual discontent. His experience of high Anglicanism resonated with her own. He thus significantly contributed to the establishment of the religious context in which her second Christian conversion took place. Likewise he moulded her expectations concerning the kind of experiences she might have. This was particularly true of the Multi revival but Haslam as will be discussed was but one of many contributors to expectations of that event.\textsuperscript{36} If Haslam set the religious stage for Ramabai's next transition, Dr Pentecost proved to be the catalyst which enabled that transition to take place. It was under his ministry that Ramabai experienced the first resolution of her doubts concerning Christ. In a subsequent letter to Pentecost Ramabai identified the particular obstacles which had proved to be a hindrance to her faith. The first,

\begin{itemize}
  \item\textsuperscript{31} Ibid, p 30.
  \item\textsuperscript{32} Ibid, pp 28-29.
  \item\textsuperscript{33} Ibid, pp 29, 34-37.
  \item\textsuperscript{34} Ibid, pp 29-32.
  \item\textsuperscript{35} Ibid, pp 28, 36-37; M. L. Fuller, op.cit., p 41.
  \item\textsuperscript{36} See the following discussions on the role of the group in shaping the expectations and experiences of potential converts. Gallagher, \textit{Expectation and Experience} pp 135-142; Gillespie, \textit{The Dynamics of Religious Conversion}, pp 116-117; Ullman, \textit{The Transformed Self} pp 84-95; Rambo, \textit{Understanding Conversion} pp 40, 118-119; Proudfoot, \textit{Religious Experience} pp 31-32,121-123.
\end{itemize}
she declared had been her reading of theology and higher criticism; the second had been her cultural upbringing in Vedanta philosophy. 37

Ramabai’s difficulties with the atonement, as we have already discussed, stemmed from her rejection of the deity of Christ. As she so eloquently explained, she had imbibed the Vedanta with her mother’s milk. 38 There was a strong tradition within the Vedanta which presented God as impassible and immutable in contradiction to the image of God within bhakti as eminently personal. But whilst Madhva taught that Brahman had attributes, that is, that God was Saguna Brahman, he also allowed for discussion about God to be analogical. 39 Clearly Ramabai had been exposed to different levels of theological discussion concerning the divine nature. She was aware of the discussions surrounding the essence of God within Dvaita Vedanta. 40 But her favoured position, which may well have owed more to the influence of the Brahma Smaj than Dvaita Vedanta was that the divine essence was immutable and impassible; God was Nirguna Brahman. 41 Similarly in the history of Christianity there have been different levels of discussion concerning the divine nature. But holiness revivalists had little interest in esoteric discussions; they pitched their message at the level of human emotion and need and accepted the scriptures at face value. Ramabai therefore continued to be faced with an all too familiar problem. How could God be subject to change as suggested in the Christian

37 Ramabai to Dr Pentecost, Christian Patriot, week following the 26th December 1892, Donore Scrapbook pp 6-7.
38 Macnicol, op. cit., p 193.
40 see “Notes of Conversations with Ramabai”, C.L.C.M, September, 1894, pp 120-121.
41 Ramabai to Dr Pentecost, Christian Patriot, week following December 26, 1892, Donore Scrapbook pp 6-7.
doctrine of the Incarnation, or suffer as in its teaching on Atonement? That was her conundrum. Exposure to the holiness tradition with its emotional fervour and its faith in God as a being, whom it declared to be the essence of love itself, struck a chord with Ramabai's own religious upbringing as a bhakta but it also placed her in a quandary. To embrace the Christian image of a suffering God, she had to let go of the Vedanta. In a letter to Dr Pentecost she described the moment.

"Since then a great burden is taken away from my heart and almost all my doubts have gone. The old Vedanta philosophy had so much occupied my mind that there was little room for anything else. According to it God is a Being who has neither sorrow nor joy, the pure essence of God cannot suffer, cannot feel for man. I had already believed John iii:16, but my difficulty was not removed. One night as I was returning home it suddenly dawned on me that our God is a God of love. God is love itself. He is not the passive being of the Vedanta who cannot feel for man. It is therefore most natural for God to sympathize with man and come to his help in his sore need. I feel very happy at this and thank God with all my heart that He sent Jesus Christ to save me by taking my sins away."

George Pentecost was conducting a series of "tent-meetings" in the revivallist tradition of the Holiness Movement in various regions of India between 1891 and 1893. He was particularly interested in the conversion of high-caste Hindus and his addresses were reputedly very popular and well attended. During the latter part of 1891 he was in Poona. It was Dr Pentecost who

43 Ramabai to Dr Pentecost, Christian Patriot, week following December 26, 1892, Dongre Scrapbook, pp 6-7.
44 Extract from a letter to Dr Pentecost, Christian Patriot in the week following December 26, 1892, Dongre Scrapbook p 6-7.
45 Stock, op.cit., Vol 3, p 504.
46 Ibid, p 504; The Epiphany, December 4, 1890, Panch Howl Archives.
47 Sister Geraldine placed the meeting between Ramabai and Pentecost as 1890. See Letters and Correspondence p 408. Ramabai referred to her "conversion" under Pentecost as having occurred on 11th November 1891. See her letter to Dr Pentecost, 6th December 1892, Christian Patriot, 15th December 1892,
first suggested that Ramabai's conversion at Wantage had been merely "intellectual" and he subsequently claimed that it was under his ministry that she been really converted.\footnote{48} Ramabai's reply to Dr Pentecost in 1892 not only modified his claims but also illustrated that at that time she interpreted her own conversion as a progressive experience rather than a single event. Thus she disputed Pentecost's claim that she had been "sensationally" converted under his ministry or that her conversion at Wantage had been merely "intellectual". However she did credit him with bringing her into a deeper understanding of Christ and of the nature of conversion.\footnote{49} She wrote,

"This word, "conversion" has a deeper and more sublime meaning to me this 6th day of December 1892 than it had on November 11, 1891, - as I believe, will continue as I more and more realize the heights, breadths and depths of God's love to mankind. This is what I meant by saying that "I was a professed Christian (when I first accepted Christianity) but not converted as I understand the word now." A friend of mine, who is an orthodox Christian, after reading the account given by some newspapers of my sensational "conversion" at one of your meetings, wrote to say that she was sure that I had not become a Christian now, and in her letter she used I think the word conversion in the sense of acceptance of the Christian religion as it is often used in this country. In replying to her letter I have used that word in the same sense, and am quite right in saying that I was converted when I was baptized, for I sincerely believed in the Christian Religion then and had also gone through some spiritual changes. Still I had retained many doubts, and as I read many books on theology my doubts began to increase more and more. Now that many of these doubts have disappeared, to me the word, "conversion" has a deeper meaning than merely the acceptance of Christianity with or without the mechanical terms which are styled "dogmas". I have most truly said that I was not converted only when you came here, the history of my conversion given in my letter to you is of some past time and had occurred in many places other than Poona. It is needless to mention when and where it took place; but what I mean to say here is that I was sincerely a believer in Christ and in the doctrine of atonement when I

\footnote{Dongre Scrapbook pp 4–5. In the same letter she also mentioned that the Reverend Small of the Free Church of Scotland convened the Pentecost meetings at his house. Small was based in Poona. See The Decennial Missionary Conference, Conclusion of Reports, in The Bombay Guardian, January 14, 1893 p 23.}

\footnote{48 Pentecost's address at the Marylebone Presbyterian Church on Christian Missions in India, reported in The Christian Patriot 12th November 1892, Dongre Scrapbook p 4.}

\footnote{49 Ramabai to Dr Pentecost, Christian Patriot, 15th December 1892, Dongre Scrapbook pp 4–5.}
attended your meetings - though I had not understood well the meaning and value of that word. I acknowledge with gladness that your sermons have helped much in realizing the significance and necessity of atonement but I had believed in it long before seeing and hearing you." 50

50 Pundita Ramabai’s letter to Dr Pentecost, 6th December 1892, Christian Patriot, December 15, 1892, Dongre Scrapbook pp 4-5.
Ramabai's religious continuity with Vaishnavism

Whilst Ramabai was exploring new religious options, she was also exhibiting evidence of her religious continuity with Vaishnavism. But the degree and nature of that continuity was very much determined by her new found loyalty to Evangelicalism. Consequently the aspects of her spirituality which suggested continuity depended upon interpretations which did not threaten her Christian faith. Such an example would be her commitment to cultural and familial values which were an integral part of Vaishnavism but which could be classed as "things indifferent". As Boyd and Hudson observed in relation to other bhakti converts to Christianity, there is a marked similarity in the respective pieties of Evangelicalism and Vaishnavism which fosters a continuity of experience.\(^5\) A further aspect which will continue to be examined is the influence which Vaishnavism exerted upon Ramabai's interpretation of Christianity. We have already noted its influence in her interpretation of the Atonement and the Incarnation. Another, which will be discussed below, was its influence upon her understanding of Christian baptism.

Cultural and Familial Values.

Following her attendance at the Indian National Congress in December of 1889, Ramabai left Poona in 1890 for an extended tour of Maharashtra and southern India, lecturing in various centres and promoting her school.\(^5\) In May of 1890 she made a pilgrimage to Anant Shastri's ashram in the Gangamul forest. In a moving letter to Sister Geraldine she wrote,


\(^5\) The Ramabai Association Annual Report, March 1891 pp 24-25.
"Here for nearly thirteen years lived my father and mother for the purpose of carrying out their intention - ie sowing (the) seed of women's education in this part of the country. Some of the flower plants, chumpas and roses which my dear mother loved and which she had planted with her own hand are still to be seen on the banks of the river Tunga. The whole ground seemed hallowed with the association of my beloved parents. The clear blue sky which looks like a round canopy over this place looked more beautiful than any other sky that I had ever seen."

From Gangamul Ramabai travelled to Udipi where she was introduced to the spiritual head of the Sode Math. She debated with him the Hindu scriptural authorities for the education of women, in an event reminiscent of her father's trial at Udipi. Whether or not the account of events at Udipi has or has not been exaggerated, the interpretation placed upon it by Ramabai and others was a clear acknowledgement by her of her debt to her father's vision and of her determination to continue his work.

Familial duty and tradition were deeply ingrained in Ramabai, which was evident in her insistence on Manoramabai following in her own footsteps. A perusal of Ramabai's letters to Mano during 1887-1888 will confirm that from the very beginning Ramabai assumed that her daughter would assist her in her life's-work. Manoramabai's subsequent struggle to assert her own independence and pursue a career in medicine was thwarted by Ramabai. Initially Ramabai had planned a medical career for Mano but after her commitment to faith healing in 1896 she had little use for medical personnel at Mutki and therefore turned her mind to an alternative career for her daughter.

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53 Ramabai to Sister Geraldine, May 11, 1890, Letters and Correspondence pp 252-252.
55 Ibid.
57 Mano to Geraldine, November 21 & 22, 1897, December 7 & 14, 1897; Geraldine to Mano, November 23, 1897, Notebook 7, Notebooks of Geraldine.
Mano capitulated to her mother's will and eventually became Principal of the Sharada Sadan. She never married and on attaining her majority Ramabai persuaded her to donate her dowry, which had been provided by an American woman, to the work of the Mission. Clementina Butler in her biography of Ramabai shrewdly commented that "Mano existed only for the joy of helping her mother to fulfil her plans."

Geraldine angrily accused Ramabai of denouncing caste yet practising caste traditions with respect to her own daughter. But Ramabai's sense of obligation to her parents was an important part of her cultural inheritance and she expected no less of Manoramabai. As has been shown, throughout Ramabai's spiritual transitions there were certain goals which remained consistent, namely to continue her father's work and to fulfil his quest for the Vision of God. Ramabai's identity was closely bound up with her parents and with their struggle to achieve their ambitions in the midst of opposition. It is not surprising then that her primary religious images and aspirations, which had been shaped by parental goals and values, shouuld have played a significant role in her search for spiritual fulfilment. Steven Katz, in his analysis of mysticism cogently argues in reference to the Jewish mystic that,

"....the entire life of the Jewish mystic is permeated from childhood up by images, concepts, symbols, ideological values, and ritual behaviour which there is no reason to believe he leaves behind in his experience. Rather, these images, beliefs, symbols, and ritual define, in advance what the experience he wants to

58 Ramabai to Geraldine, November 25, 1896, Letters and Correspondence pp 384-387.
60 Sister Geraldine, Letters and Correspondence p 369.
63 Ramabai expanded Anant Shastri's concept of female education to include secular as well as religious education. See A Testimony p 15.
have and what he then does have, will be like. 64

Although Ramabai was converted from the reformed Hinduism of the Brahmo Samaj to Christianity, there is likewise no reason to believe she left behind the images, beliefs, symbols and rituals which had permeated her childhood. Whilst the values and expectations of the Holiness Movement undoubtedly shaped her experiences within its own tradition, certain similarities of goals, aspirations and indeed rituals between Vaishnavism and holiness theology, allowed Ramabai to experience a degree of continuity with her ancestral faith. At the same time the similarities allowed for comparisons, which Ramabai was able to exploit to the benefit of Christianity. Therefore not only did she incorporate within her own spirituality Anant Shastri's search for the Vision of God as the consummate act of self surrender and devotion, but she used his quest as an object lesson to others that only in Christianity can one attain a clear realization of God and so achieve salvation. The Widows' Friend clearly presented Anant Shastri as the noble but misguided Hindu, who fulfilled all the demands of his gods in his search for purification, who utterly prostrated himself at their feet and who cried for mercy, for salvation, for healing and for bodily sustenance to no avail. 65 By comparison, Ramabai was able to state that she had achieved liberation from all her past misdeeds, purification from all sin and an assurance of being received into the presence of God without the necessity of being reborn as a Brahmin male. 66 She also testified that through the establishment of Mukti as a faith mission God supplied all her bodily and spiritual needs, not only for herself but for others. 67 The message was clear. Anant went out in faith and was not rewarded for his gods were false; Ramabai

64 Steven T. Katz, Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis, Oxford University Press 1978, p 33 original emphasis quoted in Proudfoot, Religious Experience p 122.
went out in faith and was rewarded because her god was true.68

Further evidence of Ramabai’s continuity with Vaishnavism could be seen in the church at Mukti. She designed and built the church to hold more than 2000 people. Her nephew, Krishnarao Vasudev Dongre assisted in the building and the church was completed and dedicated in 1899.69 Having seen evidence of Anant Shastri’s intention to erect a temple to Vishnu at Gangamul, R. K. Dongre and J. E. Patterson in their biography of Ramabai saw a link between Ramabai’s building of a church at Mukti and her father’s proposed temple. Indeed they inferred that she consciously attempted to complete his intentions.70 Nor was it an unreasonable suggestion given Ramabai’s desire to fulfil Anant’s quest. The sight of huge stone pillars stored at the ashram may well have inspired her during her visit in 1890. 71 Through the building of a church it was possible at one stroke to fulfil Anant’s desire to establish the worship of God and yet transcend it via the true faith. During the same visit she wrote enthusiastically of the beauty of her mother’s garden which originally was intended to surround the temple site.72 In a similar fashion Ramabai beautified Mukti and the grounds surrounding the church. Numerous trees were planted for shade whilst bougainvillea and jasmine provided colour and perfume. Nor did Ramabai forget her sojourn in England. Her rose garden was a particular source of delight to the Wantage Sisters. 73 Whilst the association of temples/churches with gardens might appear too commonplace to warrant comment, as bhaktas, Anant Shastri and Ramabai would have been well aware that the building of a temple in the midst of beautiful gardens was commanded in

70 Ibid, p 3.
71 Ibid, p 3.
72 Ramabai to Geraldine, May 11, 1890, Letters and Correspondence p 252.
73 Sister Geraldine, Letters and Correspondence, pp 362-363.
the Bhagavata Purana. It was not only considered an act of supreme devotion but it was the means by which the power of God was localised. It is a tantalizing characteristic of Ramabai’s faith that there were a number of events in her life such as this, suggestive of her continuity with Vaishnavism, which dovetailed nicely with her Christian aspirations. A further example was when she withdrew from public life in 1906 in order to devote herself more intensely to spiritual activities. In doing so she followed the traditional Hindu pattern of life (Ashrama) which was divided into four stages: the life of the student (brahmacharya), the householder (grihastha), the life of retirement and contemplation (vanaprastha), and monastic life (sannyas). Ramabai’s withdrawal to semi retirement (vanaprastha) in 1906 was for the purpose of translating the whole of the Bible into simple Marathi. The final work was published posthumously in 1924.

**Christianity and Vaishnavism: The Baptism of the Holy Ghost**

There were occasions when Ramabai’s interpretations of Christian dogmas were heavily influenced by Vaishnavism. Two of those occasions have already been discussed, namely the Incarnation and the Atonement. A third occasion was her baptism at Wantage.

In 1895 Ramabai attended the tent meetings of Nelson Gregson, a Methodist evangelist from Keswick. He was in Maharashtra in 1895 and 1896. During one of these occasions Ramabai was introduced to him through the Alliance missionaries, Jenny and Marcus Fuller and Mr and Mrs Garrison. Gregson explained to her the meaning of sanctification according to Keswick teaching and subsequently she received the baptism of the Holy Ghost.

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74 Hriday. Dasa Goswami Acaryadeva, Srimad Bhagavatam, Part 5, Canto 11, Chapter 27, Text 50, p 97.
76 M. L. Fuller, Triumph of an Indian Widow p 41; Sloan, These Sixty Years p 49.
78 M. L. Fuller, op.cit., p 41.
Ramabai’s interpretation of her second Christian conversion and baptism in the Holy Spirit in *A Testimony* is typical of holiness testimonies of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. It is full of clichés, biblical quotations and well worn phrases, which served to authenticate the experience to those who were within those circles, but which added little to an explanation of the event itself. However, the following paragraph is significant.

"There were some of the old ideas stamped on my brain; for instance, I thought that repentance of sin and the determination to give it up was what was necessary for the forgiveness of sin that the rite of baptism was the means of regeneration; that my sins were truly washed away, when I was baptized in the name of Christ. These and such other ideas, which are akin to Hindu mode of religious thought, stuck to me."

In the above paragraph Ramabai specifically named Hinduism as having been an impediment to her "true" understanding of the means of purification. However, her references to the Anglican baptismal rite - "that the rite of baptism was the means of regeneration" - reveal that she equally considered Anglicanism to have misled her. The context in which the paragraph is set contrasts Hindu and Anglican rites of purification with the baptism of the Holy Ghost and concludes that only the latter leads to purification from sin, not the rites and ceremonies associated with the former.

Holiness theology taught Ramabai the meaning of conversion and purification (sanctification) as experiences of the heart and not the intellect. Therefore, rites and ceremonies, which were outward signs, could not bestow the true inner experiences of the Spirit. They could not effect regeneration. Only

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79 Brereton, *From Sin to Salvation* pp 54-56.
83 Ibid. See also Ramabai’s reference to her intellectual conversion at Wantage on p 26.
84 Ibid, p 29.
a true spiritual baptism mediated by those who knew its power could achieve that result. Holiness teaching was therefore able to provide Ramabai with an adequate explanation of the failure of high Anglicanism to mediate a true conversion by pointing to its errors, specifically its teaching on baptismal regeneration, its failure to acknowledge the supreme authority of scripture in its life and practice; and its ignorance of sanctification and the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Ramabai added that the similarities between her baptism at Wantage and Hindu rites of purification had led her into error. The only similarity between the baptismal rite in use at Wantage and Hindu rites of purification was the use of water as the sacramental medium. Whilst there were a number of evangelical criticisms of Anglican theology, the one which may be applicable here was the suspicion that high Anglicans, like Roman Catholics, placed their faith in the power of priests to effect regeneration through the sacrament, in ignorance of the true means of salvation. Yet when we look back at Ramabai's creed of 1885, baptismal regeneration is conspicuous by its absence. In fact, as we saw, her creed revealed a total rejection of Wantage culture. But whether baptismal regeneration was omitted because she understood and rejected it or because she did not understand it at all, is not clear. However given her poor understanding of Anglicanism and her inexperience with English language and thought, it is highly doubtful that she did. What is more likely is that she interpreted her baptism at Wantage as a Hindu rite of purification. She had very little background to consider it as anything else. But her admission that she had been confused by the similarity between Hindu and Anglican rites of

97 Ibid, pp 29-33.
98 Haslam, From Death Unto Life, pp 155-156, 213-216. See also the evangelical arguments against baptismal regeneration in Chadwick, The Victorian Church Part One, pp 250ff.
purification and had since come to a full appreciation of baptism through Evangelicalism, was not only intended as a testimony to the authenticity of her second conversion, it was also intended to demonstrate the inadequacy of both Vaishnavism and Christian sacramentalism to effect spiritual changes of such depth.

Ramabai’s conversion to holiness theology had already involved her in the surrender of the Vedanta’s image of God as impassible and immutable, while her exposure to holiness revivalists and missionaries, such as the Fullers, taught her that purification was not a matter of merit but an act of grace, which required only an informed faith.99 Ramabai’s baptism in the Holy Spirit conferred upon her, so she was led to believe, the state of holiness or sanctification. She also identified the element which had been lacking in her first Christian conversion—an experience of closeness with God and an assurance of being not only regenerated, but sanctified.90 In comparison with high Anglicanism in which the quest for perfection was presented to Ramabai as a continual, if not life-time struggle, the Keswick Movement was able to assure its converts that sanctification could be appropriated by an act of consecration.91 Nelson Gregson’s facilitation of Ramabai’s baptism of the Holy Ghost was her formal initiation into the holiness community of churches and missions in India and the beginning of her long association with the Christian and Missionary Alliance.92 But it was only the first of a two part experience, the second of which

90 Ramabai, A Testimony pp 29-30.
91 Sister Geraldine to Ramabai June 21 1885, Letters and Correspondence pp 64-65.
92 Jenny Fuller became a close confidante of Ramabai and her mentor, according to Lucia Fuller. See Triumph of an Indian Widow p 41.
occurred in 1897 was her baptism by total immersion.

Immersion

Ramabai travelled to a sacred river to undergo her baptism by immersion.\(^{93}\) Whether it was the same occasion as her journey to the Bhima River with a number of catechumens is not clear but that event also occurred in 1897 and considering the significance of it and the choice of Pandarphur as the venue, it is not an unlikely choice for the scene of her second baptism. The officiating minister was the Reverend Bruere of the American Methodist Mission.\(^{94}\) Pandarphur was sacred to the God, Vithoba. Devotees on route to Pandarphur had to cross the Bhima. Before doing so a number of offerings were made to the gods. The greater the value of the offerings, the greater the merit which accrued to the devotee. Between the 13th and 16th centuries the shrine of Vithoba at Pandarphur was accessible to women and Shudras but due to entrenched caste interests it was closed at the end of that period to those social groups.\(^{95}\) Ramabai had made a number of journeys to Pandarphur during her youth but the site, which prided itself on its devotion to God and which had once represented a weak link in the armour of caste, had become to her as a Christian, a symbol of utter corruption.\(^{96}\)

There was a number of myths associated with Pandarphur. One described the attempt of souls to cross the Bhima River at the moment of their death. Only those with sufficient merit to catch hold of the tail of the sacred cow, it said, would make the crossing in safety and thereby achieve salvation.\(^{97}\)

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93 Geraldine is clear that Ramabai was baptized by immersion along with a number of others but assumes that the event took place closer to Kedgaon. See Letters and Correspondence, p 350.
94 Macnicol, Pandita Ramabai pp 101-102.
95 Appasamy, op.cit., p 113.
96 Ramabai, "Trying to be Saved by Their Own Merit", "The Latest Religious Fair" Mukti Prayer Bell September, 1904 pp 10- 18ff.
97 Ramabai, "Trying to be Saved by their own Merit" Mukti Prayer Bell September 1904, pp 10ff.
In association with the myth, cattle were paraded for sale on the river banks. These could be purchased by devotees and donated to the priests in order to accumulate merit. The baptisms at the Ghima River were very clearly meant to capitalize on a wealth of symbolism associated with the site. Thus for instance in contrast to their poor prospects for salvation offered within Hinduism, the female catechumens rejoiced in their salvation within Christianity. They offered no gifts of flowers or coins, nor were they required to placate the priests or purchase cattle, for salvation was not a matter of accruing merit within Christianity but was entirely a gift of God. These and other such comparisons were enthusiastically explained by the Reverend Bruere to those passing by. But whilst there was comparison there was also continuity, for the converts were immersed in a river sacred to their memories from childhood. It had its own potency. The gods may have changed but the river undoubtedly retained its sanctity through its new associations. Ramabai described her baptism by immersion as a symbol of the death of self interest, ambition and vanity. It was her consummate act of self surrender and devotion. No work or act of hers, she vowed, would ever again be a testimony to her own vanity.

In choosing to be rebaptized Ramabai may simply have been following Alliance practice. Many converts to holiness, particularly Pentecostals, believed that any previous baptism was invalid if the officiating clergyman had not himself been baptized in the Spirit. But in doing so, she repudiated the efficacy of her baptism at Wantage.

Pity

Nicol Macnicol recognized the continuity in Ramabai's spirituality

98 Ibid.
100 Ibid, pp 10ff.
101 Sengupta, op.cit., p 248.
103 Anderson, Vision of the Disinherited p 176.
between bhakti and holiness piety. As noted, Ramabai disliked the religious formality of Wantage and Macnicol believed that the simplicity and fervour of Methodism proved more appealing to her. In fact he described her piety as a blend of Methodism and Vaishnavism, and in his biography of Ramabai he sought to draw out the implications of that observation. He argued that having been persuaded of the truth of Christianity it was inevitable that Ramabai would be drawn towards a form of Christianity whose spirituality resonated with her own traditions. Ramabai certainly had extensive contacts amongst Methodists, but more importantly they were Methodists who moved in holiness circles. The Reverend Bruere of the American Methodist Episcopal Church was the pastor at Multti for many years and Ramabai attended his services as did Manoramabai. But Ramabai’s beliefs were largely forged by her association with a number of groups, including Methodists, who were committed to holiness teachings. Amongst these groups were faith missions which frequently assisted like minded missions with staff. Mr Reeve of the Poona and Indian Village Mission lent assistance to Multti and likewise received it in return. He also conducted Bible studies with Ramabai, Mano and Sunderbai Power.

105 Macnicol to Manoramabai, 18th November 1919, Mukt Archives; Macnicol, op.cit., pp 4-5.
107 The Holiness Movement grew out of Methodism and in the 1890s the Methodist Episcopal Church (Nth) was particularly influenced by holiness teachings. See Anderson, Vision of the Disinherited, pp 29-30, 63. See also Marsden, Fundamentalism and American Culture p 72-73.
109 Apart from Bruere, mention must be made of Nelson Gregson, the Methodist revivalist from Keswick, Sunderbai Power and Minnie Abrams of the Methodist Episcopal Church. The latter was particularly influential at Multti.
The Christian and Missionary Alliance also provided staff for Muki. As the missions were all established on an interdenominational basis they stressed their similarities, not their differences.

Ramabai was not unique in demonstrating a continuity between Vaishnavism and Evangelicalism in her piety. Dennis Hudson’s study of Krishna Pillai illustrated that Pillai’s conversion to Evangelicalism from the Shri Vaishnava tradition was influenced by the similarities between the traditions. He further argued that in Pillai’s spirituality there was a discernible continuity between the nature of his spirituality as a bhakta and as a Christian, although the object of his devotion, that is the deity, had changed. Hudson identified what he believed to be a structural continuity between Evangelicalism and Vaishnavism in the spirituality of Pillai which was evident “in the way he thought about himself in relation to God and the nature of his devotion and practical piety.” Hudson believed that bhakti (devotion) and saranagati (salvation) were the key concepts providing that continuity.

111 The Muki Prayer Bell. 1906, p 2 stated that the Alliance missionaries, Mr and Mrs Franklin were running the Bible School at Muki, while Miss Long and Miss Williams have left Muki for the Pentecostal mission at Vasind. Mano’s Circular Letter. 1906 related that Miss MacGregor, Miss Parson and Miss Bowes had been lent to Muki by the Poona and Indian Village Mission. See also, Sister Geraldine, Letters and Correspondence, p 349.
113 Hudson, op.cit., p 192. For a discussion on continuity in a convert’s religious choices see Rambo, Understanding Conversion, pp 61-62.
115 Ibid.
As a bhakta, Hudson argued, Pillai understood devotion as the highest relationship of man to God and taking refuge at the feet of Vishnu as the only means of salvation.\textsuperscript{116} Therefore, he concluded that type of Christianity to which Pillai converted, namely Evangelicalism, allowed him to continue to express his devotion in a similar manner.\textsuperscript{117} Ramabai's conversion to holiness theology likewise gave her permission to incorporate the emotional fervor and aspirations of the bhakta in a Christian context and like Pillai to take refuge at the feet of Christ. As Robin Boyd has explained, the goal of the bhakta is the clear realization of God.\textsuperscript{118} To attain that realization involves the total commitment of heart and mind.\textsuperscript{119} It is "unconditional surrender."\textsuperscript{120} It is the common aspiration of both bhaktas and charismatic evangelicals and it is expressed in almost identical language.\textsuperscript{121} Therefore, according to Boyd, many Hindu converts to Christianity find the bhakti-marga to be "a direct bridge linking the world of bhakti with the world of Christian faith, a bridge over which the bhakta may cross, and still feel that he has not strayed from home."\textsuperscript{122}

A convert of Pillai's, A. S. Appasamy, explored the similarities between Hindu and Christian thought.\textsuperscript{123} He, like Pillai, sought to retain his cultural identity without compromising his Christian faith. He retained the kudumi (tuft of hair), which was regarded by many missionarirs as an "emblem of caste pride."\textsuperscript{124} He explored parallels between the Bible and the Vedanta and

\begin{footnotes}
\item[117] Ibid, pp 191-193.
\item[118] Boyd, \textit{Introduction to Indian Christian Theology} pp 123-124.
\item[119] Ibid.
\item[120] Appasamy, \textit{The Theology of Hindu Bhakti} p 107.
\item[121] cf, Ramabai, \textit{A Testimony} p 30; Appasamy, op.cit., p 107.
\item[122] Boyd, op.cit., p 112.
\item[124] Ibid, pp 25-26.
\end{footnotes}
practised yoga and meditation. By contrast, Ramabai was precluded by the hostility of conservative Evangelicalism towards Hinduism from exploring such options. For evangelicals regarded the line between Christianity and heathenism as sharply drawn and any erosion of it as a compromise with evil.

Ramabai’s spirituality retained core elements which were central to her upbringing as a Hindu. This was particularly evident in her search for personal holiness. Purification from sin was inextricably linked to salvation within Vaishnavism. The search for sufficient merit to obtain that goal was, as we saw, the motivation which drove the Dongre family from one sacred site to another. On the other hand, whilst forgiveness of sin is inextricably bound up with salvation in Christianity, personal holiness is a separate quest amongst its various traditions. Within high Anglicanism, for instance, it is regarded as a life-long struggle, but within the Holiness Movement, it is considered attainable through a single act of consecration, the reward for which is the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The Holiness Movement therefore was able to assure Ramabai that she had achieved the personal holiness for which she and her family had suffered. Similarly, she was able to fulfil the expectation of material reward for a life of faith through charismatic Evangelicalism, which again was an expectation due to her bhakti heritage.

Evidence therefore has been presented to show that Ramabai retained her continuity with Vaishnavism through her inclusion of Anant

125 Ibid, pp 18, 101-104, 120-121.
126 Sharpe, Not To Destroy But to Fulfil, p 317. But by the turn of the century there were signs of a new and more tolerant approach to Hinduism by missionaries, except that is amongst conservative evangelicals. See Sharpe, Not to Destroy but to Fulfil, pp 309ff; Sushil Machava Pathak, American Missionaries and Hinduism: A Study of their contacts from 1813-1910, Munshiram Manoharial, Delhi pp 220ff.
128 Ramabai, A Testimony pp 15-16, 38-44.
Shastri's quest with her own. As we have seen, Anant's quest shaped Ramabai's primary spiritual aspirations and goals which were finally realized through charismatic Evangelicalism. Note has also been taken of the way in which she was able to dovetail certain aspects of Vaishnavism with her own interests as a Christian. The tool which enabled her to maintain this continuity was language, not as the main text, but as a sub-text and we have explored a number of ways in which it was evident, for example in the nature of her piety. Macnicol first identified it. To understand Ramabai, he maintained, it was necessary to disregard a large part of her holiness language because it was "borrowed terminology". In using the phrase "borrowed terminology", Macnicol was not implying that Ramabai's conversion was not genuine, for it could not be doubted, so much so had its perspectives become her own. Rather in using the term "borrowed" he simply meant that holiness theology was not the language of her primary spirituality and therefore as a means of fully expressing the nature of her faith, it was inadequate. There was also an indigenous faith and language, which periodically asserted itself, and which also needed to be taken into account. Therefore, whilst Ramabai took on the beliefs and attitudes of those who had facilitated her spiritual fulfilment, the identification of a Vaishnava sub-text within her holiness language, far from questioning her conversion, only serves to explicate the depth of her spiritual fulfilment.

129 Macnicol to Lucia Fuller, January 18, 1922, Multi Archives.
130 On the use of language specific to a group to affirm commitment see, Ullman, The Transformed Self pp 84-95; Rambo, Understanding Conversion pp 118-120; V. Bailey Gillespie, The Dynamics of Religious Conversion pp 116-117.
Impact of Conversion

As might be expected Ramabai’s conversion had its greatest impact upon her belief system, something of which has already been discussed in relation to the atonement and sanctification. There was likewise evidence of significant change in her attitudes and behaviour. Her interest in the social amelioration of women had been evident for a number of years. It was an ambition which was nurtured under Christian influence. Yet one of the paradoxes of premillennialism was its commitment to foreign missions when it had little hope for either the salvation of the world or the redemption of society. 132 Premillennialists however were galvanised by their belief that the end of the world was in sight.133 They were burdened by the Gospel imperative to reach as many souls as possible with the "Good News" before that day came.134 Whilst many were primarily interested in the conversion of souls, often to the exclusion of social amelioration, The Christian and Missionary Alliance was able to combine evangelism with an "aggressive social policy"135 As a result Ramabai’s conversion did not impinge upon her commitment to social welfare and she extended her activities into famine work, orphanages, rescue homes and schools as well as instituting industrial programmes designed to equip men and women with employment skills.136 But evangelism became very much her first concern, with social welfare as a means to that end. In effect, she saw conversion as the

132 Weber, Living in the Shadow of the Second Coming pp 80-81; Marsden, Fundamentalism and American Culture p 68.
only real hope for the alleviation of social ills. 137

Conservative evangelicals such as the Alliance divided the world into
two military camps: the children of light and the children of darkness. 138
Hinduism was regarded as a stronghold of satanic power and influence and as
such had no redeeming features. 139 Most importantly evangelicals were called
upon to avoid all compromise with the devil. Ramabai’s attempt to administer a
"non sectarian" school was viewed by Dr Pentecost as a compromise. 140 He
criticized the association of the Sharada Sadan with Unitarians and other
liberals whom he believed had objected to Ramabai preaching the Gospel to her
students. 141 During the process of her conversion Ramabai’s difficulties in
maintaining a "non-sectarian" policy in the administration of her school became
very evident. Neither she nor her American associates could justify her
attempts to circumvent that policy any longer. 142 Whilst she did not share
Pentecost’s view that "non-sectarian" schools were unjustifiable ( she argued
that social custom rendered them a necessity), her recourse to a policy of
religious freedom allowed her, so she believed, to "indirectly influence" students.
In this way Ramabai was able to justify her evangelistic activities in her
institutions.

Hindu, Muslim and even sometimes Government hostility to her work

137 Mrs Marcus Fuller, op.cit., pp 268ff; Rachel Naider, "Pandita Ramabai and
the Child Widows of India" Ramabai Mukti Mission (undated) p 12; Anderson, Vision
of the Disinherited pp 190-200.
138 Marsden, op. cit., pp 62-63; Macnicol, Pandita Ramabai pp 125-126; Weber,
op.cit., pp 92-94.
139 Sharpe, Not to Destroy but to Fulfil pp 25-28, 317.
140 Ramabai to Dr Pentecost, 6th December 1892, Dongre Scrapbook pp 4-5
141 Ramabai to Dr Pentecost, 6th December 1892, Dongre Scrapbook pp 4-6;
"Pandita Ramabai and the Sharada Sadan" Christian Patriot January 1893,
Dongre Scrapbook pp 7-8.
142 Dr Donald to Ramabai, July 25, 1902, Letters and Correspondence pp
placed Ramabai in a difficult and at times dangerous environment.\textsuperscript{143} But such trials confirmed holiness teaching that she was in the midst of a spiritual warfare; that satanic minions and influences were everywhere.\textsuperscript{144} Even such bodies as the CSMV were considered misguided, if not dangerous, because they were not evangelical. Manoramabai confessed to Sister Geraldine that many of Ramabai’s friends disapproved of her association with Wantage.\textsuperscript{145} Sister Geraldine blamed a close friend of Ramabai’s, Alfred Dyer, a Quaker and the Editor of the Bombay Guardian, for deliberately hindering Mano’s contacts with Wantage when the latter was in England.\textsuperscript{146} As for Hindus, Ramabai, like her western co-religionists, frequently alluded to them as "the ‘heathen’ or as "idolators".\textsuperscript{147}

Although Manoramabai described Mukti as an Indian mission, in the eyes of many of its neighbours it was only peripherally so.\textsuperscript{148} Certainly it was under Indian direction, and food, clothing and life style gave it an Indian appearance but its religious orientation and aggressive proselytization appeared to many to be further examples of foreign influence and interference with the

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\textsuperscript{143} Dr Donald to Ramabai July 25, 1902, Letters and Correspondence p 372; American Ramabai Association Annual Report 1906 pp 30ff; Sister Geraldine, Letters and Correspondence p 367; See also Ramabai’s reply to Commission IV, Edinburgh Missionary Conference 1910 concerning the aggressive opposition from "The Swadeshi Movement" which her evangelistic "bands" were encountering, Ramabai’s reply to Commission IV Mukti Archives. On the activities of the Hindu Tract Society see Sundararaj Manickam, The Social Setting of Christian Conversion in South India pp 73-74.

\textsuperscript{144} Ramabai, “A Visit from the Buffalo God” Mukti Prayer Bell, March 1904 pp 10-12; Ramabai, “Showers of Blessing” Mukti Prayer Bell, September 1907 pp 3ff; Macnicol, op. cit., pp 114, 125-126.

\textsuperscript{145} Manoramabai to Geraldine, September 30, 1901, Notebooks of Geraldine, no 7; Sister Geraldine, Letters and Correspondence p 420.

\textsuperscript{146} Sister Geraldine, Letters and Correspondence, pp 324-325, 354.

\textsuperscript{147} See for example, the Mukti Prayer Bells of 1906; Minnie Abrams, account of the doctrines taught at Mukti in Mukti Prayer Bell, September 1907 pp 20ff.

\textsuperscript{148} See Manoramabai’s Introduction to life at Mukti in her Questionaire for Prospective Missionaries, Mukti Archives.
customs of the region. Ramabai's desire to demonstrate her commitment to her new religious affiliation precluded her from making any serious attempts at acculturation. This became evident in her change of attitude towards Hinduism as she moved deeper into holiness circles. Where she once respected the "higher Hinduism" of the Vedas and advocated that missionaries had an informed and sympathetic approach, after 1895 that was not so. She subsequently denounced Hinduism as satanic and Western admiration for the Vedas as misguided. And ironically in view of her criticism of Goreh, she removed the study of Sanskrit from the curriculum of her schools for a number of years, replacing it with Latin. Manoramabai was likewise forbidden to study Sanskrit or the Vedanta, and Hindu scriptures were removed from the library at the Sharada Sadan in contradiction to her earlier policy of religious freedom. Baptistm by immersion become mandatory at Muki and worship was formalized; developments which also indicated significant departures from Ramabai's earlier position. Thus whilst her spiritual continuity with Vaishnavism was evident in certain respects, her conversion to holiness theology exerted a limitation to the degree as well as to the nature of that continuity. Accordingly she expressed disdain towards those who claimed to have found enlightenment or inspiration within Hindu philosophy or who sought to incorporate aspects of it within their own spirituality. For unlike Pillai and Appasamy,
Ramabai's second conversion had been mediated by Western revivalists. She had also spent considerable time abroad in America and England which had further exposed her to Western attitudes. As Dr Charles Cuthbert Hall wrote,

"Ramabai sees things with the eyes of a Hindu woman; she feels them with the heart of a Hindu woman; and she also sees and feels with the eyes and mind and the heart of a woman who has had European culture and who has entered into the liberty with which Christ makes one free."156

Hall's reference to the influence of Western culture on Ramabai was particularly evident in her replies to Commission 1V of the Edinburgh Missionary Conference 1910. It was also apparent in her attitude to the Indian Nationalist Movement. In reply to question 93 requesting her opinion of indigenous missions Ramabai commented,

"Of late there have been springing up here and there all over the country, what are called either indigenous or independent missions which are partly or wholly managed by native Christians. Unfortunately, I do not have a very good opinion about many of these which seem to be some of the species of money making plans."157

It would appear that subconsciously Ramabai had identified so well with Western culture that she failed to describe Muki as an indigenous mission under the control of a native Christian.

A second example of Ramabai's identification with Western attitudes lay in her premillennialism. As a premillennialist she found it difficult to share Indian nationalist aspirations. Her focus was on the kingdom of Christ and anything less was of little importance. She did take a keen interest in national affairs but primarily in order to pray effectively for nationalist leaders.158 Yet in apparent contradiction to her own requirement that her staff abstain from political involvement, she wrote a pamphlet for students entitled Loyalty to

156 Dr Charles Cuthbert Hall, The American Ramabai Association Annual Report 1905, p 34.
157 Ramabai's reply to Commission 1V, Muki Archives.
the British Government in which she was critical of the use of Gandhi's policy of non-co-operation. She believed that Paul's letter to the Romans, Chapter 13: 1-7 had made it very clear that Christians were required to obey the laws of the land and respect established authority. 159

**Spiritual Fulfilment**

In the aftermath of her baptism by the Holy Spirit, Ramabai demonstrated a pronounced reliance on biblical texts for specific guidance. After prayer she often randomly opened her Bible in the expectation that God would give her a specific message through a particular text. Or in her study of the Bible she would find a message clearly intended for her and relevant to a specific situation in her life. 160 By such actions she clearly demonstrated her belief in the Bible as literally the Word of God.

During this period she read the story of the China Inland Mission and came under the influence of James Hudson Taylor amongst others. 161 Taylor, like Ramabai, believed that God spoke directly to the soul either through scripture, conscience or the ministrations of others. 162 In 1896 during another of Gregson's meetings at Lonavala, Ramabai had an intense emotional experience. She had with her fifteen baptized widows and she prayed that God would square their number within the year, although she was aware that she had little room for such expansion. 163 At the end of 1896, she received news of immense

159 Circular Letters, Ramabai Mukti Mission, November, 1920, October 1921, Mukti Archives.
160 See Ramabai's letter to the Bombay Guardian, January 10, 1898, Letters and Correspondence pp 425-427.
161 Ramabai, A Testimony p 37
163 Mrs M. Fuller, op.cit., pp 41-42; Sister Geraldine, Letters and Correspondence pp 325-326.
suffering due to famine in the Central Provinces. In response to the situation, she believed God was calling her to establish a faith mission. Within twelve months she had more than squared the number of her converts.

The second direct result of her baptism in the Spirit was that she was led to believe that she had the gift of healing. Lucia Fuller credited Ramabai with a knowledge of herbal medicine which she learnt from her mother, saying that it was surprisingly effective. As Ramabai became more closely associated with Alliance missionaries she demonstrated an increasing acceptance of their teaching. As the years passed she did not waver in her commitment to divine healing and there were accounts of remarkable healings at Muktí as well as significant failures.

In 1900 Ramabai moderated her position sufficiently to employ a nurse at Muktí but she expected her staff and many of the students would have sufficient faith that God would heal them. In 1906 she reluctantly established a hospital at Muktí for the benefit of the community, if not for the staff. But healing was more than the cure of the body, it also involved the cure of the heart. The establishment of Muktí during the Central Provinces famine of 1897

166 Sister Geraldine Letters and Correspondence pp 349-350; "Ramabai Sings Magnificat" Letters and Correspondence pp 425-426.
167 Sister Geraldine, Letters and Correspondence, p 409.
168 Fuller, Notebook p 61.
169 Ramabai to Geraldine, November 25, 1896; Sister Geraldine to Ramabai, December 14, 1896, Letters and Correspondence pp 334-337, 339-342; Muktí Prayer Bell April, 1908 p 31; Report of the American Ramabai Association, March 1919 p 14; Manoramabai to Sister Geraldine, November 22, 1897, Notebooks of Geraldine, Book 7.
171 Manoramabai, Introduction to Muktí Mission in Information for Prospective Missionaries, Muktí Mission Kedgaon; Sister Geraldine, Letters and Correspondence pp 409-410.
and its consolidation in the midst of frequent outbreaks of bubonic plague, recurring famine and political violence, nevertheless provided opportunities for Ramabai to counteract some of the tragedies in her life. 172 In rescuing women and children from the famine areas, she was not only giving expression to her sense of compassion and missionary zeal, she was also healing herself. 173 Yet Ramabai’s own health was not always good. She never fully recovered from influenza, which she contracted during the epidemic of 1918. In spite of her frailty she refused all medical aid and eventually succumbed to septic bronchitis in 1922. 174

Mukti

The China Inland Mission proved to be the prototype of many faith missions, including those established by the Alliance. 175 Missionaries were expected to be totally dependent upon God for all their daily wants and needs. 176 No regular salaries were promised and any money given to the mission had to be entirely voluntary. 177 Most importantly, Taylor placed spiritual qualifications, that is evidence of sanctification, above that of social or educational attainments. 178 The C.I.M. therefore attracted many recruits who would...
been rejected by other societies. Taylor's association with the Holiness Movement and the inter-denominational character of his work likewise aided recruiting.

In the establishment of Mukti in 1898, Ramabai was inspired by The China Inland Mission. Like Taylor, she placed a higher value upon spiritual qualifications than educational attainments and was pleased to describe her staff as amongst the weak of the world. Although the Sharada Sadan was funded by the Ramabai Circles amongst other bodies, Mukti existed entirely on voluntary funding. Like Hudson Taylor, Ramabai did not publicize the needs of the Mission in order that its success could be entirely credited to God. In turn the success of the Mission publicly demonstrated its divine approval.

Knowledge of the establishment of Mukti at Kedgaon did not take long to spread through the Ramabai networks. Geraldine wrote that Ramabai had a name to "conjure with". As a result money poured into the Mukti treasury from America, Canada, England, Ireland, Scotland, Australia, Hawaii, Egypt, China, Ceylon and India just in the initial years alone. Mrs Rachel Naider, a Canadian, was only one of many women who devoted their lives to publicizing Ramabai's work. She travelled the world for fourteen years disseminating information and raising funds to support the work of Mukti as well as other institutions which Ramabai established. Evangelists and visitors from all over

178 Ibid, pp 234-236.
179 Ibid, pp 243-244.
180 Ibid, pp 3-8, 244-245; Marsden, op.cit., p 97; Weber, op.cit., pp 74-75.
181 Amongst others who influenced Ramabai were George Miller's institution at Bristol and John O Paton's New Hebrides Mission. See A Testimony 37.
182 Sister Geraldine, Letters and Correspondence pp 358-359.
183 American Ramabai Association 1902 p 15.
184 Ramabai, A Testimony pp 38-40.
185 Sister Geraldine, Letters and Correspondence p 363.
186 American Ramabai Association Annual Report 1902, p 15; Sister Geraldine, Letters and Correspondence p 363.
the world visited the Mission over the years and like Anant Shastri at Gangamul, Ramabai generously welcomed such pilgrims.\footnote{188}

Ramabai’s second conversion was punctuated by a number of significant moments: the surrender of an image of God as immutable and impassible; her baptism in the Holy Spirit; her immersion in a sacred river; the establishment of Muktí as a faith mission and finally the revival. All of these events contributed towards her sense of spiritual satisfaction, her attainment of a clear Vision of God. Mediating that process were holiness revivalists and particularly providing the network of support was the Christian and Missionary Alliance. Holiness theology of conversion and sanctification defined the type of religious experiences which Ramabai expected to have and it provided her with the linguistic tools by which to express them.\footnote{189} Furthermore the experiences which she was taught to expect were consonant with the goals and aspirations of Vaishnavism. They were therefore not unfamiliar.\footnote{190} Her subsequent baptisms of water and of spirit were rites of initiation into a community which was prepared to support her in her work.\footnote{191} Ritual binds communities by providing formal occasions for identification with its traditions, aspirations and values. As such it often becomes a vehicle for emotional release.\footnote{192} Such an experience occurred during Ramabai’s baptism by immersion.\footnote{193} Similarly the description given of her emotional state at Lonavala was a testimony to the resolution of her doubts and to her attainment of peace of mind.\footnote{194}

\footnote{188} Sister Geraldine, \textit{Letters and Correspondence} p 375; Sengupta, op.cit., pp 268-269.
\footnote{190} Rambo, op.cit., p 61.
\footnote{191} Ibid, pp 83-84, 116.
\footnote{192} F. R. Lynch, "Toward a Theory of Conversion and Commitment to the Occult" \textit{Conversion Careers}, (ed) Richardson pp 107,109; Rambo, op.cit., pp 81-82; Mol, \textit{Identity and the Sacred} p 263
\footnote{193} Ramabai, \textit{The Widows’ Friend} pp 192-193.
Chapter 13: The Revival

The Student Volunteer Movement (SVM) was established during the Mt. Hermon Conference of the Young Men's Christian Association in 1886. The Student Volunteer Movement of India and Ceylon was founded ten years later as a result of John Mott's visit to India. Founding members of the SVM, such as Robert Wilder and John Mott, held important offices in the YMCA which allowed them to use its organizational structure in India to launch the movement. In Madras both Mott and Wilder addressed large meetings of students. At the end of the Madras meetings forty one students had indicated their intention to offer themselves for missionary service in India. Mott's world tour resulted in the creation of the World Student Christian Federation and the appointment of himself as General Secretary. Kali Charan Banerji of Calcutta and Samuel Satthianadhan of Madras were appointed as the Indian representatives to this body.

In Britain the Student Volunteer Missionary Union (SVMU) had close ties with Keswick. Many of the early British leaders of the SVMU were associated with the Convention. Amongst Ramabai's Keswick associates in India

2 Stock, op.cit., Vol 3, pp 690-691.
3 Sharpe, Not to Destroy But to Fulfil pp 177-178.
5 Ibid, pp 757-758.
6 Ibid, pp 690-691.
7 Ibid, pp 690-691.
9 for example, Douglas Thornton, Temple Gardiner and Donald Fraser. See Harder, op.cit., pp 142-149.
was the Reverend R. J. Ward. In 1897 when the Student Missionary Union of India issued a request for a world day of prayer for the conversion of India, Ward took the initiative to make it an annual event. Through his prayer letter, he circulated prayer requests and disseminated information. Amongst those on Ward’s mailing list was Ramabai. The World Day of Prayer for the conversion of India was held on December 12, 1897.

In 1898 Minnie Abrams informed the students at Multi of the work of the SVM in both Britain and America and suggested the formation of a group which would similarly dedicate itself to missionary work. At the commencement of the revival in India, Ramabai asked for thirty volunteers, possibly from this group to give up their studies for full time evangelism in the villages. These volunteers proved crucial to the revival at Multi.

In 1898 Ramabai attended the Keswick Convention in Britain. In an action reminiscent of Hudson Taylor at the General Missionary Conference in Shanghai, she requested prayer for 200,000 Christian Indians, male and female, to be dedicated to the evangelization of India and for “an outpouring of the Holy Spirit on all Indian Christians.”

At Keswick Ramabai made significant contacts with a number of people, one of whom a Mr Begg of Glasgow, not only took a keen interest in the

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10 Helen S Dyer, Revival in India pp 28-29.
13 Ward wanted Ramabai to publish an account of the revival at Multi, a request she initially refused. See Ramabai’s “More Surprises” Mukti Prayer Bell, October 1905 p 8.
14 Stock, op.cit., Vol 3 p 767.
15 Miller, Pandita Ramabai p 71.
16 Dyer, op.cit., p 43.
17 Sister Geraldine, Letters and Correspondence p 365; Ramabai, “More Surprises” The Mukti Prayer Bell, October 1905, pp 5ff.
18 Ibid; Guiness, The Story of the China Inland Mission p 5; Sloan, These Sixty Years p 49.
work at Mukti, but more importantly sent her books and pamphlets and kept her generally informed of developments within Keswick circles in Britain. In 1902 the Keswick Convention called for the establishment of world wide prayer circles to pray for world revival. Revival was to be a primary matter for prayer. Conviction had spread throughout a number of religious groups, including Keswick, that the new century would dawn in a burst of Pentecostal power heralding the imminent return of Christ.

The expectation of a world revival also spread through Keswick circles in India, including Mukti. Ramabai was well versed in what to expect from a revival. William Haslam had described in detail phenomena such as writhing in agony over sin, crying out to God for mercy, visions, prophecy and other charismatic gifts, such as healing and casting out of demons. But Haslam was not Ramabai’s only source of information on revivals. Her association with the Christian and Missionary Alliance, the Methodist Church, and her own experience with visiting revivalists provided her with further sources of information. In addition both Minnie Abrams and Ramabai were in contact with faith missions and holiness groups in various parts of the world. Apart from Keswick, Ramabai had extensive contacts through the American Ramabai Association whilst Minnie was well-known within the Methodist Episcopal Church and to Reuben Torrey and his associates at Minneapolis. She also had

19 Ramabai, "More Surprises" Mukti Prayer Bell, October 1905, p 5ff; Ramabai received annual reports of the Keswick Convention, see Minnie Abrams' letter to Mano, August 10, 1909, Mukti Archives.
20 Anderson, op.cit., p 44.
21 Ibid, p 44.
23 Anderson, op.cit., p 44; Abrams, op.cit., pp 77-78; Ramabai, Mukti Prayer Bell, 1906 p 3; Abrams, op.cit., pp 4, 77-78; Sister Geraldine, Letters and Correspondence p 369.
24 Haslam, From Death Unto Life p 53, 70-78.
frequent contact with the Stone Church in Chicago, which became a major centre of Pentecostalism after the Los Angeles Revival. In 1905 news filtered through to India of a great revival in Wales which excited Ramabai. It appeared to be the fulfilment of Acts 2: 1-22, which had been long awaited by the Holiness Movement as a second Pentecost.

Mr. Begg sent Ramabai news of the Welsh Revival. He also sent her articles, booklets and pamphlets describing the phenomena and the spread of the revival throughout Britain. The revival produced an outbreak of glossolalia, a term which describes vocalization ranging from babbling like a baby through to speaking in "angelic" tongues, and xenoglossy, the ability to speak in a language previously unknown to the speaker. News of the Welsh revival caused Ramabai to intensify prayer at Mukti and to request through the Mukti Prayer Bell a similar intensity of devotion in her other institutions. At Mukti, an extra prayer meeting was established in the early morning which initially drew 70. Many of the Mukti staff were known to fast in association with prayer.

26 Minnie frequented a number of holiness centres connected with Pentecostalism during her furloughs in the United States. See Miss Phipps letter to Manoramabai, October 1, 1909, Manoramabai Correspondence, Mukti Archives. On her connections with the Stone Church see Miss E Muzzy's letter to Minnie Abrams, August 9, 1909, Abrams Correspondence, Mukti Archives. On the Stone Church as a centre of Pentecostalism see, Anderson, Vision of the Disinherited p 75.
27 The revival commenced locally in 1903 following a Keswick style convention at Llandrindod Wells in the Cambrian Mountains across the English border. See Anderson, op.cit., p 44.
28 On the expectation of a second Pentecost, See Anderson, op.cit., p 44; Abrams, op.cit., p 4; Miller, Pandita Ramabai pp 85-86.
30 Ibid; Anderson, op.cit., p 44.
32 Dyer, Revival in India p 43.
33 Ibid, p 43; Abrams, op.cit., p 5.
34 Sister Geraldine, Letters and Correspondence p 389.
Manoramabai particularly practised this form of self denial. By June of 1905, 550 were in attendance at Mukti praying twice daily for revival and the conversion of India. In 1905 news arrived at Mukti that the revival had commenced at the Welsh Mission in Assam. Ramabai had built a prayer tower at Mukti, and excited by news of revival on Indian soil, she organized a roster which enabled streams of "praying bands" to ascend the prayer tower hourly night and day.

Before examining the revival at Mukti and the theology behind it, a significant feature which emerges from the documents was its expectancy. In the creation of that expectancy and in its maintenance, agents such as Ramabai had a significant role to play. As we have seen Ramabai and her staff gradually increased the momentum at Mukti through the use of prayer and fasting, whilst testimonies from eye-witnesses of revivals in other quarters, together with studies establishing biblical precedence, both defined and legitimated the types of experiences which could be expected; all of which added to the sense of anticipation. Whilst revival to revivalists was a sign of spiritual vitality the expectation of a world revival greatly excited the imagination of holiness devotees and stimulated their fervor. Torrey visited Wales on the heels of the Welsh Revival. Revival also occurred at the Keswick Convention of 1905 as well as at A. B. Simpson's Tabernacle Church. In 1906 it erupted at the

38 Dyer, op.cit., p 43.
39 Ibid; Sister Geraldine, Letters and Correspondence p 389; Minnie Abrams, op.cit., pp 74ff. Proudfoot emphasises the role of religious teachers and guides in preparing disciples for the experience of supernatural phenomena through the use of various techniques which thereby structure the nature of the experiences in accordance with particular religious traditions. See Proudfoot, Religious Experience pp 122-129, 228-229.
40 Anderson, op.cit., p 45.
41 Niklaus, Sawin, Stoiesz, All for Jesus p 115; Anderson, op.cit., p 45.
Azusa Street Mission in Los Angeles and at Nyack Missionary College, whilst "sparks" were reported from Sweden, Germany, Uganda, Madagascar, Egypt, Persia, China, Australia, the Gilbert Islands, Chile, Brazil and various centres in the United States and Canada.\footnote{42} Through prayer letters, circulars, telegraph, railway and shipping, the news was carried, phenomena described and activities recommended, all in the hope of spreading the "revival fire".

In 1902 Ramabai had sent Minnie Abrams and Manoramabai to Australia to publicize the work of Muki and its associated institutions, but also according to Helen Dyer "to catch the revival fire."\footnote{43} The idea of being able to catch "revival" became an important feature of its dispersal. As the Indian revival spread to Muki it was dispersed into other institutions through a number of agents, one of whom was Minnie Abrams.\footnote{44} Miss Lawson's Famine Girls' Orphanage at Telagaon experienced revival after a visit from Minnie.\footnote{45} And in turn Miss Lawson and the Reverend W. H. Stephens of Poona took the news to Methodist churches in Bombay with the result that revival occurred there shortly afterwards.\footnote{46} Mr and Mrs Salisbury, described by Helen Dyer as "experienced evangelists," visited J. C. Lawson's independent faith mission in North India. After the visit, revival broke out in the mission and some individuals received the power to cast out demons.\footnote{47} The uniformity of the phenomena reported in holiness missions had its source in a common religious tradition which was reinforced by descriptions of the revival given by agents from similar religious backgrounds. People were prepared to expect certain phenomena in accordance with their tradition and they did. A case at Muki revealed that phenomena were produced according to expectation even when the expectation

\footnote{42} Abrams, op.cit., pp 69-70; Anderson, op.cit., p 45.  
\footnote{43} Dyer, Revival in India p 43.  
\footnote{44} Ibid, pp 53,89.  
\footnote{45} Ibid, p 53.  
\footnote{46} Ibid, p 63.  
\footnote{47} Ibid, pp 59-61.
was based upon a misunderstanding. As Minnie explained, a common interpretation of the baptism by fire was that it was an experience of purification, with the "fire" being a metaphorical allusion to the trials and afflictions which await any Christian who attempts to closely follow Christ.48 However, according to Minnie, the Indian residents of Mukti interpreted the baptism of fire literally, not metaphorically. Therefore, they were expecting a sensation of burning in their bodies during the experience, and Minnie added "God met them in their expectation".49 In an unexpected twist, Minnie herself, in spite of her previous interpretation of the baptism of fire as metaphorical, also experienced a similar sensation during the revival. In the context of describing similar sensations experienced by others, she wrote,

"The author received the baptism of the Holy Spirit eleven years ago, but did not know about the fire. God in His great mercy has revealed this also, and now for several months the fire within has been burning, and the command is that it shall not go out. It is the manifestation of the presence of God.50

But whilst the agent had the power to predispose some towards the experiences he or she related, the religious traditions in which the revival occurred were also able to affect the nature of that experience. This was very evident in the holiness missions in which phenomena consonant with holiness tradition was reported.51 It was also evident in the CMS stations which were

49 Ibid, pp 7-8.
50 Ibid, pp 84-86.
51 The Free Methodist Mission at Yeotmal, Berar, reported shouting, dancing, running, falling to the ground. Mr and Mrs Albert Norton's Boys' Home at Dhond described waves of prayer, weeping, confessing of sins, crying for mercy. Mukti reported both glossolalia and xenoglossy, simultaneous audible prayer, rolling, shaking, clapping and jumping. Similar phenomena was reported at Sunderbai Power's Zanana Training Home at Poona; Miss Shorat Chuckerbutty's Famine Orphanage; Miss Lawson's Famine Girls' Orphanage and the Friends Mission at Hoshangabad C.F. Dyer, op.cit., pp 50-53, 61,63; Abrams, op.cit., pp 8-9,77-79. See also Minnie's article on the Revival in the Mukti Prayer Bell, September 1907, pp 17-20.
touched by the revival. As they did not subscribe to holiness theology, they did not experience any of the extraordinary phenomena reported from holiness missions. Nor did they claim to have received any of the charismatic gifts which were reported to be in evidence there. As an example of the role of tradition in influencing the nature of religious experience, the CMS station at Aurangabad had a visit from Minnie Abrams in which she undoubtedly reported the range of phenomena at Muktí and other stations, but although Aurangabad experienced a revival resulting in conversions and a deepening of spiritual commitment, there were no extraordinary phenomena, "no thunder of His power." as Helen Dyer observed. And this was typical of the reports from other CMS stations which claimed to have experienced revival during this period. Minnie would have ascribed the lack of spiritual phenomena amongst the CMS missions as due to the failure of staff to "abandon" themselves "to the full control of God. Stock approvingly reported that the CMS missionary, Mr T. Walker of Tinnevelly, had suppressed all exhibitions of "excitement" in the revival there and rebuked all behaviour suggestive of abandonment. Instead Mr Walker only accepted behaviour from his congregation which was indicative of conversion, that is a deep realization of sin and an intention to live a Christian life. But Mr Walker did report that he had difficulties with Plymouth Brethren, Salvationists and other "free-lancers" who attempted to cause confusion and disruption amongst his flock. Walker subsequently wrote an article for the Church Missionary Review (May 1907) in which he dismissed insig

53 Ibid pp 64, 89.
54 Ibid, pp 63-64, 89, 147-148.
56 Stock, op.cit., Vol 4, p 254.
57 Ibid.
58 Ibid.
stories abroad of an Indian revival, but admitted thankfully that the Spirit of God had been unmistakably working in a few places. 59

Suspicion of "enthusiasm" was not confined to the Church of England, Moody and many of the evangelists which followed him also shunned much of the behaviour which had traditionally been associated with American revivalism. 60 Walker's attitude was therefore not uncommon given the lack of phenomena reported from other CMS stations. But it does demonstrate that the traditions and authorities within an institution, such as the CMS, defined in advance the type of revival which its stations were prepared to entertain, that is, they were prepared for conversions and a deepening of faith, but not for the "thunder of His power". Both Ramabai and Minnie were also initially concerned about the excessive behaviour at Mukti during the revival and attempted to quell it. Yet when they did they discovered that the revival lost its impetus. 61 Minnie concluded,

"No one should seek to have manifestations, visions, and dreams, because others have had them." "Let us seek the fulness of the baptism of the Holy Ghost and fire, that we may serve God acceptably, and have power to witness and to win souls for Christ. Then if God chooses to send the manifestations of His Spirit upon us, let us not grieve Him by quenching those manifestations." 62

Minnie dated the commencement of the revival at Mukti as the 29th June, 1905. A young woman, one of the volunteers who had given up her studies to devote herself to evangelism in the villages awoke at 3:30 a.m. convinced that the person next to her was on fire. She rushed across the dormitory, filled a bucket with water and was about to throw it over her companion when she

noticed that the fire was supernatural. Conviction of sin, public confessions of sin, simultaneous prayer, shaking, trembling, dancing, shouting, visions and dreams followed, heightening the degree of excitement amongst the group of volunteers. For days many of them did not sleep or take food, such was the intensity of their prayers and experiences. The experiences reported by the volunteers and their obvious signs of having passed through great emotional upheaval proved to be the catalyst for revival at the Mission. As the excitement built at Mukti others "caught the revival fire". Many wept and fainted under the emotional weight of protracted prayer meetings, others writhed and screamed, attracting the attention of neighbours. Charismatic gifts followed over the ensuing months, such as prophecy, healing and tongues, both glossolalia and xenoglossy.

Accusations of hysteria and delusion were made against the residents of Mukti by Christians and non-Christians. Some charged the Mission with imitating what they heard reported from European missions. Minnie pointed to formidable predecessors who were not "hysterical women" such as the apostle Peter, the prophet Daniel and the evangelist Charles Finney - all of whom had experienced supernatural phenomena. Ramabai was more direct. She particularly regarded the accusation that Mukti was imitating Western missions as racially motivated. She wrote,

63 Ibid, p 6. See also Ramabai, "More Surprises" Mukti Prayer Bell, October 1905 pp 5ff; Sister Geraldine, Letters and Correspondence pp 390-391.
64 Abrams, op.cit., pp 5-10.
69 Ramabai, "Showers of Blessing" Mukti Prayer Bell, September 1907 pp 6-8; Sister Geraldine, Letters and Correspondence p 423.
70 Ramabai, "Showers of Blessing" Mukti Prayer Bell, September 1907 p 9.
71 Abrams, op.cit., pp 75-76, 80-82.
"If we take it for granted that all that is going on in connection with the revival among India's people, is nothing but imitation, then how are we to be sure at all, that all Indian people, who are professed and baptized Christians, and who are engaged in Christian work are not imitators of foreign Christian missionaries?

"Why should not the Holy Spirit have liberty to work among Indian Christian people, as He has among Christians of other countries? And why should everything that does not reach the high standard of English and American civilisation, be taken as coming from the devil?"72

Similarly, Ramabai was scathing in her defense of accusations of hysteria.

"I have seen not only the most ignorant of our people coming under the power of the revival, but the most refined and very highly educated English men and women, who have given their lives for God's service in this country, coming under the power of God, so that they lose all control over their bodies, and are shaken like reeds, stammering words in various unknown tongues as the Spirit teaches them to speak, and gradually getting to a place, where they are in an unbroken communion with God. I, for one, do not dare to put them down as a few ignorant hysterical women."73

Amongst those Englishmen who received such an experience in one of Ramabai's institutions was R. J. Ward.74 The experiences recorded at Mukti were no doubt heightened by many factors, including Ramabai's management of the revival's expectancy and the gradual build up in momentum through devotion, increased spiritual activities, group dynamics and food and sleep deprivation. Of particular interest, however, is the interpretation these events had for Ramabai and the staff at Mukti, particularly in light of the emergence of Pentecostalism.

72 Ramabai, "Showers of Blessing" Mukti Prayer Bell, September 1907 pp 9-10.
73 Ramabai, "Showers of Blessing" Mukti Prayer Bell, September 1907 pp 11-12.
74 Dyer, op.cit., p 156.
The Los Angeles revival of 1906 which commenced at the Azusa Street Mission thrust the issue of "tongues" into the limelight within holiness circles. Within the context of expectations of a world revival heralding the Parousia, the restoration of the Apostolic gifts reported in Wales, India and Los Angeles, appeared to confirm such expectations, not least to members of the Christian and Missionary Alliance. William Seymour, the pastor at the Azusa Street Mission, declared tongues to be the hallmark of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, in accordance with the teachings of his mentor, Charles Parham. In a loosely structured organization such as the Christian and Missionary Alliance, questioning the validity of people's Spirit baptism on the basis of tongues threatened to decimate it. The baptism of the Holy Ghost was a central feature of Simpson's Four-fold Gospel and whilst he taught that the charismatic gifts had not died out with the Apostolic Church, he had not singled out tongues as crucial to that experience. The controversy deeply eroded the confidence of the Alliance as many of the leaders of the new Pentecostal Movement were drawn from its ranks. It has been estimated that the Ohio Alliance suffered the greatest number of defections. In Indianapolis 50% of Alliance members were lost to Pentecostalism. There were also substantial defections in Chicago and whilst many other Alliance groups chose not to defect they remained sympathetic to the new movement. In 1908 the Alliance leadership, whilst

76 Anderson, op.cit., pp 144-145.
77 Ibid, pp 4, 55-56, 60-61, 70-71; Marsden, Fundamentalism and American Culture pp 72,93.
78 Anderson, op.cit., pp 145-146.
79 Niklaus, Sawin, Stoesz, All for Jesus pp 113-115; Anderson, op.cit., pp 144-145.
80 Ibid, pp, 111, 146.
81 Niklaus, Sawin, Stoesz, op.cit., pp 111.
82 Ibid, p 146.
83 Ibid, pp 74-75, 80, 146; Niklaus, Sawin, Stoesz, op.cit., pp 110-112.
privately having many reservations about Pentecostalism, relegated the issue of tongues to the category of personal liberty with various other undefined issues in its organization. In the early years of the twentieth century the Ramabai Mukti Mission was moving towards alignment with the Christian and Missionary Alliance. It was sympathetic to the new Pentecostal Movement and many candidates for missionary service at Mukti were drawn from Pentecostal circles.

The phenomena which Mukti residents displayed at the revival was duplicated in other holiness groups as the revival spread through the United States and Canada. Anderson's thesis that Pentecostalism appealed to marginal and dispossessed people, poor whites and racial minorities is supported by the degree and character of the religious enthusiasm displayed during the revival. The respectable middle-class revivalism of Moody and his associates, which had curbed public displays of religious enthusiasm and demeaned ecstatic behaviour as unrespectable, was overthrown in the revival as people jumped, stamped and danced in the Spirit in accordance with earlier folk traditions. The criticism that the excessive behaviour observed at Mukti during the revival was largely due to newly converted women from Hinduism who were still exhibiting the vestiges of their heathen upbringing, was contradicted by such reports from America. But it was a common criticism and one which may have reflected class distinctions as much as anthropological ones. That is not to say that Hinduism has no tradition of ecstatic behaviour but rather that the expectation and legitimation of the behaviour displayed at Mukti was provided

85 Anderson, op.cit., pp 79–78; Niklaus, Sawin, Stoez, op.cit., p 111.
by holiness teachers. Undoubtedly the Hindu converts at Mukti, who like the early Pentecostals were a despised minority, drew upon a wide range of experience including their religious background to express their feelings, but it was not the dancing and shouting or speaking in unknown tongues that was significant but the interpretation of them. The staff at Mukti had the task of interpreting the students’ various religious experiences during the revival. Some students were informed that what they had experienced was conversion and others that they had received the baptism of the Holy Ghost and fire. Whilst there was awareness by the staff that some behaviour could be counterfeit, ecstatic behaviour was on the whole considered a sign of spiritual vitality.

In her book, *The Baptism of the Holy Spirit and Fire*, published by the Ramabai Mukti Mission, Minnie Abrams attempted to grapple with the charismatic experiences within her immediate circle and to offer an explanation which was compatible with similar events elsewhere within the Holiness Movement. Prior to the revival, she believed, along with many other European workers at the Mission, that she had been already baptized in the Holy Spirit. She recounted her own experience of the baptism as a decisive and memorable experience involving an act of consecration and of total surrender to God but not as ecstatic. Her theology of sanctification was very much in the tradition of Moody, Torrey and Simpson, in that she regarded the baptism of the Holy Ghost as a second blessing conferring holiness and empowerment for service. But Minnie’s association with Torrey in Minneapolis may well have influenced her previous expectations of the baptism and thereby explain her initial revulsion at religious enthusiasm. Torrey’s description of his own spirit baptism was very

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89 Abrams, op.cit., pp 87-88.
94 Ibid, pp 56-56, 63-64; Marsden, op.cit., pp 78-80; Anderson, op.cit., p 42.
matter of fact and did not, by all accounts, include the experience of any ecstatic phenomena. He believed that the appropriation of the baptism was simply a matter of accepting the scriptural promises by faith.

Minnie stated that around 1894 she had received the baptism of the Holy Ghost, but had never experienced the "fire" until the revival. In describing that experience, she wrote that her whole body shook and filled with an intense sensation of joy. In The Baptism of the Holy Ghost and Fire, Minnie used the term "fire" in two distinct but not mutually exclusive ways. Firstly she used it to refer to an ecstatic experience of spiritual power resulting in the attainment of charismatic gifts. Secondly she used it to describe a process of purification in which the consecrated soul was likened to a burnt offering.

There were three consecutive stages in the attainment of the baptism of the Holy Ghost and fire, so Minnie argued: pardon, purity and power. Minnie described the role of "fire" in the first two stages as a cleansing agent which destroyed sin and produced the state of purification or sanctification. In the third stage, "fire" was the quickening agent, empowering and enthusing the soul with the ecstasy of God's love. Where Minnie's theology differed for example from Torrey's at this point was that she believed the fullness of the

95 Abrams, op.cit., pp 40-42, 80.
97 Ibid, pp 42-43.
99 Ibid, pp 80, 83.
102 Ibid, pp 45-46, 51-53. But in her description of the three stages she was careful not to claim that the baptism with fire was a third blessing. She would have been fully aware of the condemnation by many holiness groups, not least in her own denomination, of those who espoused the third blessing heresy. See Anderson, op.cit., pp 35-37, 171-172. Torrey also argued that a pre-condition of the baptism was personal purity. See Marsden, op.cit., n.38 p 249.
103 Abrams, op.cit., pp 63-64, 85-87.
104 Ibid, pp 63-64.
baptism of the Holy Ghost could not be appropriated without an experience of intense emotion. It was the fire of ecstasy which unleashed the Apostolic gifts and the failure of others to attain them was largely due to their prejudice against religious enthusiasm. 105 "Fire" was therefore a term Minnie used not only to refer to spiritual cleansing and empowerment, but to describe and authenticate the religious enthusiasm displayed at Mukti during the revival. 106 It was not an original term; it had long been used in holiness circles which were characterized by religious enthusiasm. 107 Minnie’s confession that she had been prejudiced against religious enthusiasm and initially had attempted to control events at Mukti explains her statement that until the revival at Mukti she had never experienced, “the fire”. 108 She continued to judge the failure of others to experience it in the same light. 109 Having embraced religious enthusiasm, she declared that the restoration of the Apostolic gifts was intended to be a witness to non-believers of the presence and power of God, and to believers of the imminence of the Parousia. 110 Her publications, including The Baptism of the Holy Ghost and Fire, were widely disseminated by the Mukti Press and were influential in establishing the charismatic reputation of the Mission. 111

Having abandoned herself to the power of God and having completely lost her prejudice against religious enthusiasm, Minnie frequented the Stone Church in Chicago as she did other centres of Pentecostalism during her furloughs in America. The main issue, that tongues was a necessary sign of the

110 Ibid, pp 43-46,67-73. See also “Showers of Blessing” Mukti Prayer Bell, September 1907 pp 4 ff.
111 A number of letters to the Mission and to Minnie personally request copies of her publications, particularly The Baptism of the Holy Ghost and Fire, but also Prayer Warfare. See for example, Grace Dempster’s letter to Minnie of April 5, 1910, Abrams Correspondence, Mukti Archives; Ramabai, A Testimony pp 26-27.
baptism of the Holy Ghost, she rebutted, as did Ramabai and Manoramabai.112 They all believed that the resurgence of charismatic gifts within Christian communities was a sign of the last days and they followed national events with a keen eye to prophetic fulfilment, particularly events concerning the Jews, who they believed, would play a pivotal role in the Second Coming of Christ.113 Although Ramabai was reputed to have uttered some words in Hebrew on at least one occasion during her devotions, Manoramabai was adamant that her mother did not have the gift of tongues.114 Minnie described Ramabai, along with Hudson Taylor and George Müller, as having the gift of faith.115 Mano spoke in tongues but there is some uncertainty regarding Minnie.116 But Minnie's publications, for example, Prayer Warfare, suggest that one of her gifts was prayer and her welcomed addresses at the Stone Church, Chicago would suggest that she also spoke in tongues.

The gift of tongues was accepted at Mukti as one evidence of the baptism of the Holy Ghost. There were at least two reputed cases of xenoglossy reported by the Mukti Mission but mostly vocalization was unintelligible. Ramabai described hearing an Indian girl praying in English and Minnie heard a boy pray in Sanskrit.117 Such was their commitment to supernatural phenomena that neither resorted to obvious explanations. Pentecostals were therefore welcomed

112 Ramabai, "Showers of Blessing" Mukti Prayer Bell, September 1907, pp 10 ff; Manoramabai to Miss Coley, June 3, 1916, Manoramabai Correspondence, Mukti Archives; Minnie Abrams, op.cit., pp 67-73. 113 Abrams, op.cit., pp 67-73; Ramabai, The Mukti Prayer Bell 1909 pp 2-3; Fuller, Notebook pp 49-50. Mano referred to the Jewish search for a homeland as one of the signs of the Parousia. See the Mukti Mission Circular Letters for, Jan 1918, April 1918, February 1919. 114 Mano to Miss Coley, June 3 1916, Manoramabai Correspondence Mukti Archives. 115 Abrams, op.cit., p 69. 116 Mano to Miss Coley, June 3, 1916, Manoramabai Correspondence, Mukti Archives. 117 Ramabai, "Showers of Blessing" Mukti Prayer Bell, September 1907 pp 3 ff; Minnie Abrams on the Revival, Mukti Prayer Bell, September 1907, p 20.
at the Mukti Mission, provided they were willing, as were other members of staff, to work compatibly with members of other denominations and to allow specific issues of controversy to remain a matter of private judgement. Consequently in the doctrinal statement of the Ramabai Mukti Mission there is no mention of tongues or any of the gifts of the spirit. It is strictly a conservative evangelical statement designed to have a wide appeal across denominational differences. It is only when we turn to more informal statements in the Mukti Prayer Bell of 1907 for instance, or in publications which issued from the Mukti press, such as Minnie Abrams' *The Baptism of the Holy Ghost and Fire* that the specific character of the Mission emerges.

118 Minnie Abrams to Monoramabai, March 8, 1910, Mukti Archives.
119 See Minnie's account of the doctrines taught at Mukti in the Mukti Prayer Bell, September 1907, pp 19-23.
Chapter 14: The Blessing of the Guru

In our analysis of Ramabai’s break with Anglicanism it was concluded that in spite of her conversion to Christianity, her belief system remained co-terminous with that of the Brahmo Samaj. In fact, it could be said that the one discernible change in her world view was that she had replaced Vishnu with the Christian God as the object of her devotion. In comparison, her earlier conversion from Hinduism to the Brahmo Samaj had resulted in a major overhaul of her belief system as she exchanged what she believed to be an irrational view of life with its myths of the miraculous suspension of the rational laws of the universe for one which recognized law, order and predictability in line with the findings of modern science. But in converting to the Brahmo Samaj Ramabai believed she had ascended to a higher level of truth, the proof of which lay in the Samaj’s recognition of the insights of modern European science. Therefore, Anglican dogma concerning the deity of Christ challenged the rationality of that system and threatened to pull her back into a world of superstition, avatarism and miracles. As was evident in the analysis of Ramabai’s relationship with the CSMV, her rejection of doctrines central to its faith, her scepticism in regard to supernaturalism and her defiance of Anglican authority, placed her on a cultural collision course with the Community.

In contrast, Ramabai’s second Christian conversion involved her in a profound change of world view. After her baptism in the Holy Spirit she embraced a belief system which regarded supernatural events as everyday occurrences for sanctified Christians. Whether it was miraculous healings or a personal revelation from the Bible, holiness devotees regarded the whole of life as permeated by the Spirit of God. Their expectation of the imminent return of Christ provided motivation for the daily task of evangelism as well as compensation for the doubts, the disappointments and the injustices of the world. Revivals, glossolalia and other manifestations of the Spirit strengthened their
beliefs and enhanced their faith in their mission.

But whilst Ramabai's conversion to holiness theology was a radical departure from the theism of the Brahmo Samaj, it was not as significant a departure from Vaishnavism. In fact there is evidence to suggest that in her conversion to holiness theology Ramabai had, to some extent, returned to her cultural roots. Once again she embraced faith as an experience of the heart, adopted a supernaturalistic view on life, a literal interpretation of scripture and rediscovered a God who provides all the material and spiritual blessings of life. In a manner similar to Madhva Vaishnavism, the Holiness Movement taught that "Truth" was not only revealed through recognized authorities; it was discovered through an act of ultimate surrender and consummate devotion. And with due regard to differing contexts both systems looked for a tangible appearance of the gods on earth. For Madhvas the Vision of God was the penultimate experience to release, whilst Ramabai's interpretation of the manifestations of the Spirit during the revival as signs of the imminence of the Parousia offered a not too dissimilar interpretation. Certainly the commonality of aspirations and religious fervour between these two faiths created, as Boyd has said, a bridge between them allowing bhakti converts, such as Ramabai, to cross from one to the other, reassured by familiar landmarks.¹ Nor was she unique in her assimilation of Vaishnavism to her Christian spirituality. Other converts such as Krishna Pillai, A. S. Appasamy, A. J. Appasamy and the poet Narayan Vaman Tilak, have testified to the acculturation of their Christian faith through bhakti.²

The central thesis of this work has been that Ramabai's spiritual fulfilment was dependent to a large degree upon her fulfilling her father's quest through her own. In doing so she demonstrated a degree of continuity with Vaishnavism. It can be concluded that a major reason for her dissatisfaction

¹ Boyd, An Introduction to Indian Christian Theology p 112.
with Brahmoism and Anglicanism was her recognition that neither of these religious systems was a suitable vehicle through which to achieve that goal. The Brahmo Samaj ultimately failed to support her commitment to women’s education, nor was its rationalism able to provide her with the spiritual satisfaction she craved. In converting to Anglicanism she found a faith which placed a high value on women and which was committed to the social amelioration of women in India but her difficulties with Anglican authority and culture proved to be irreconcilable. Furthermore she had little empathy with the formality of Anglican devotion, the rigidity of its organizational structure or its culture. Anglicanism was too alien, too far removed from Vaishnavism to bring her fulfilment. It was not until her return to India that she found the conditions conducive to her spiritual fulfilment, in a familiar landscape and amongst her own people. But the failure of both Brahmoism and Anglicanism to fulfil Ramabai’s spiritual need should not be surprising considering that her father had nurtured her formative religious aspirations, thereby establishing the grounds for their fulfilment.³

In this study of religious conversion it has been evident that Ramabai’s conversions were driven by her own needs. In meeting those needs she was required to adapt to a number of conversion models. Both Anglicanism and the Brahmo Samaj had models of conversion which were strongly authoritarian. Both expected to exercise a large degree of control over their converts. In the case of the Brahmo Samaj control was exercised by males as heads of families. In such a context, a widow would always be of less consequence regardless of the public’s interest in her. Social custom demanded that a woman had both male protection and guidance, even more so a widow who was often treated with great severity. By contrast the Christian and Missionary Alliance was not authoritarian. The flexibility of its organizational structure (during this period), was intended to maximise support for missionary endeavour.

³ Rambo, Understanding Conversion p 40.
by making allowances for some degree of sectarian and doctrinal differences amongst its members. As such the Alliance was very attractive to independent missionaries like Ramabai, who needed support but not interference in their work. Nor did the Alliance discriminate amongst missionaries on grounds of gender. Single independent women, even those in charge of missions, could be assured of support without compromising their autonomy. Therefore given the history of Ramabai's struggle against authoritarianism, the Alliance had much to commend it.

Through our study of Ramabai we have noted the complexity of religious conversion. Whilst some individuals report a cataclysmic experience, "a road to Damascus" type of conversion, it is neither typical nor necessary to a successful conversion, if success is to be measured by depth of commitment. As this study confirms, religious conversion involves meeting to a greater or lesser extent the particular needs/need of the convert which may not necessarily be religious. More importantly it has suggested that conversion is a process of adaptation to a particular religious model and further suggests that the more successful converts are those who are best able to manage that process. As we shall see in Ramabai's narrative, "The Blessing of the Guru," she successfully adopted the evangelical personal transformation model favoured by The Christian and Missionary Alliance. In that narrative she was able to identify crucial incidents in her past as moments of divine grace guiding her towards conversion and spiritual satisfaction.\(^4\) It is by no means the best example of Ramabai's application of the model, (A Testimony is a far more consummate example) but it reveals the means by which Ramabai resolved the guilt she felt in departing from the path of her guru, Anant Shastri.

The Blessing of the Guru

Mention has been made of the impact conversion had amongst orthodox

Hindus. The conversion to Christianity by a Brahma was no less devastating to members of that community. As we have seen Ramabai received death threats, though whether from Brahmans or orthodox Hindus is not clear. But outwardly she appeared to accept the impact of her conversion on Indian society with fortitude. It is not until we closely examine a narrative such as "The Blessing of the Guru" that we see the personal cost to her of conversion. In it she explains the means by which she resolved her feelings of disloyalty to her father which her conversion had generated. How long she carried this guilt we will never know but the narrative exposes the problem by disclosing its resolution.

As we discussed in chapter 2, the role of the guru in Madhva Vaishnavism was regarded as crucial to the salvation of his disciple. His word was not only law, it was the voice of God and as such his blessing carried significant power. In her narrative, "The Blessing of the Guru", Ramabai drew upon this belief and subsequently resolved her guilt concerning her conversion to Christianity by interpreting Anant's final prayer for her as prophetic. She concluded that whether or not he had been fully aware of the significance of his utterance, he had directed her to Christ. She wrote,

"...he told me in a few words, broken with emotion, to remember how he loved me, and how he taught me to do right, and never depart from the way of righteousness. His last loving command to me was to lead an honourable life, if I lived at all, and serve God all my life. He did not know the only true God, but served the - to him - unknown God with all his heart and strength; and he was very desirous that his children should serve Him to the last. "Remember, my child," he said, "you are my youngest, my most beloved child; I have given you into the hands of our God, you are His, and to Him alone you must belong, and serve Him all your life."

"He could speak no more. My father’s prayers for me were no doubt heard by the Almighty, the all merciful Heavenly Father, Whom the old Hindu did not know. The God of all flesh did not find it impossible to bring me, a great sinner and an unworthy child of His, out of heathen darkness into the saving light of His love and salvation. I can now say to the departed spirit of the loving
parent: "Yes, dear father, I will serve the only true God to the last." 6

The narrative which is featured in The Widows' Friend illustrates the evangelical personal transformation model of conversion. Its use of such terms as "sinner" and "out of heathen darkness into the saving light..." were/are part of the stock language of evangelical testimony. Undoubtedly one of the narrative's functions was to convey to converts the depth of Ramabai's adaptation to the model and to appeal to others to aspire to a similar experience. But the story has a more personal function than its witness to the effectiveness of transformation. It also served to justify Ramabai's conversion to herself by means of the prophetic utterance of Anant. By shaping her interpretation in such a manner, Ramabai laid bare the thread which connected her Christian faith with Vaishnavism. As she so passionately argued, her father's prayer was answered through her discovery of the true faith, enabling her to embrace it with both parental and divine approval. 5

The importance to Ramabai of her parents' approval for her new religious direction finds support from Lucia Fuller. She recalled that Ramabai believed her parents had been saved by Christ. Basing her belief on the text, 1 Peter 3: 18-21, Ramabai maintained that her parents were amongst those who had responded to the Gospel after their death and that she would see them in heaven. 7 By such means Ramabai consoled herself that her parents were saved and that she undoubtedly had her father's approval for her change of religious affiliation.

6 Ibid.
7 Fuller, Notebook, p 57, Mukti Mission
Conclusion.

In our assessment of Ramabai's conversion to Evangelicalism we have discussed the reasons for Ramabai's attraction to the type of evangelical Christianity represented by The Christian and Missionary Alliance. Particular emphasis has been placed on the group's model of conversion, namely, that conversion is the result of a personal religious experience described as the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Through our study of Ramabai's conversions the role of groups in shaping the expectations of converts has likewise been explored. We saw this particularly demonstrated in the events leading up to Ramabai's conversion to Evangelicalism. Her emotional readiness for change was evident in her own spiritual dissatisfaction which was mirrored in the events surrounding the Sharada Sadan. It was reinforced by her reading of holiness literature and through her encounter with holiness revivalists. The capacity of revivalist meetings to arouse the emotions and psychologicaally prepare a potential convert for an emotional experience has been well noted. Whilst revivalists create the conditions for such an experience to occur, the convert subsequently attributes a satisfactory outcome not to a human but a divine agency. And having achieved emotional release and satisfaction within a specific religious context the convert takes on the beliefs and language of the group which has facilitated it. The more successful a convert is the more he or she is continually evaluating and reinterpretting past and subsequent experiences in light of those beliefs.

To conclude, the theoretical basis of this work owes much to the perspectives of Wayne Proufoot. It has proceeded on the assumption that there is no uninterpreted experience; that context, including expectation, shapes and

8 Ullman, The Transformed Self pp 84, 103.
9 Gallagher, Expectation and Experience pp 97-98.
10 Ibid. pp 139-140; Rambo, op.cit., pp 118-120.
11 Gallagher, op.cit pp 139-140
interprets all experience, religious or otherwise. Lewis Rambo's analysis of
conversion, particularly his chapter on the role of the advocate in securing
conversion has guided the analysis of the role of the Community of St Mary the
Virgin in Ramabei's conversion. Studies showing the role of the group in
creating and sustaining the linguistic context for the interpretation of religious
experience have also been influential in this work. On that basis I have
concluded with such reports that accounts of conversion are tailored to the
belief system of the group. I have also taken Gallagher's point that the
perspectives of the researcher, the questions which guide his or her research,
impinge upon and shape the nature of the analysis. Consequently no one
interpretation can be regarded as definitive. Therefore in an attempt to balance
the subjectivity of this work, I have attempted to make clear the questions and
the perspectives which have governed it.

12 Proudfoot, Religious Experience pp 11, 15, 31-32, 71 129.
14 Ullman, op.cit., pp 84-95; Gallagher, op.cit., pp 138 140; Gillespie, The Dynamics
of Religious Conversion pp 116-117; Proudfoot, op.cit., p 123; Rambo, op.cit., pp
118-120.
15 Ullman, op.cit., pp 84-95; Rambo, op.cit., pp 137-139; James A Beckford,
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16 Gallagher, op.cit., pp 136,141-143.
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