

CHAPTER- II

NINETEENTH CENTURY SOCIAL REFORM AND WOMEN QUESTION OF BENGAL

At the dawn of civilization, during the Vedic age, women occupied an exalted position in society. After the Vedic period the status of women deteriorated considerably. The outstanding change has been the change from freedom to bondage and from honour to disgrace. The notion of patriarchic control over women in Hindu society in Bengal was a common factor from post-Vedic age to eighteenth century. During this period woman completely dependent on man and subjected she to the authority of a father, wife and mother.¹ From the first decade of the nineteenth century started the contrast in the Bengali society by the foreign trends. As a result, psychological change started tremendously in the society. The ‘condition of women’ did not become a major social reform issue until the nineteenth century. The period prior to British rule in Bengal had seen numerous changes in the position and status of women.² In Calcutta and the *mofussil* as well, the *antahpur* was the centre of the female world. Women carried out the daily domestic routine within the *antahpur*, an inner courtyard surrounded by a kitchen and living apartments. According to one missionary visitor to a Calcutta *zenana*, it was “a collection of dirty courtyards, dark corners, break-neck staircases, filthy outhouses and entries, overlaid with rubbish or occupied by half-clad native servants, stretched about on charpoys, or on the ground indifferently.....narrow verandahs and unfurnished, or semi-furnished and very small rooms.”³ With this, it may be noted that, *purdah* there was the system by which men exercised ultimate control over women’s psychology and manners. The performance of *bratas* undeniably played an important part in conditioning a woman to her ideal role in society and the family.⁴ Polygamy and *Kulinism*, dowry, female infanticide,⁵ child-marriage, *Sati* burning, *purdah*, lack of education, ban of widow remarriage etc. were the main characteristics of social structures in colonial India nay Bengal.

The most important efforts for social reform in nineteenth century Bengal was a intricate response to the presence of British colonial rule. British attitude to Indian society in the early nineteenth century was not alike critical. They did not attack contemporary social customs, but adopted a policy of ‘non-interference’.⁶ The

British rulers introduced new ideas about women's roles and capabilities and these ideas were adopted by progressive Indians. In spite of the above perception and also due to outstanding efforts of a few enlightened personalities like Raja Rammhun Roy, Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, Henry Vivian Derozio, Keshab Chandra Sen and even Mahatma Gandhi for emancipation of women, the general condition of women in colonial India nay Bengal was far from satisfactory. It was not 'gender', but class and caste also did make differences. They realised that, the condition of women is one of the most remarkable circumstances in the manners of nations.

The 'women's question' was a central issue in some of the most contentious debates over social reform in the nineteenth century.⁷ Two issues dominated many of these movements. First, it related to the status of upper-caste Hindu widows and was linked up with questions regarding 'Sati' and widow-remarriage. Second, pertains to education of women and the making of a new middle class culture entailing new codes of morality, new formation of the home as the insulated private sphere and a new codification of customary law.⁸ For the women's movements it meant that, reformers had to seek traditional sanction for the proposed liberation of women from certain customs and imposed obligations over the ages. This tendency in looking back to the past itself developed two dimensions. While some depicted a perfect condition for women in the Vedic ages, others sought *Shastric* injunctions to prove the invalidity of some practices. The fact that, religious sanction was resorted to legitimise social reform, there was another crucial link between religious and social reform in India. In India, where religion and social structure were organically interwoven. Caste, hierarchy, sex inequality, untouchability and social taboos flourished because of the sanction of religion.⁹ Social reform consequently constituted a part of the platform of all religious reform movements. In this regard, the activities of Christian missionaries may be taken as the first initiatives for the emancipation of women.

Before Rammohun Roy, the Danes at Serampore, and Chinsurah and the French in Chandernagore had prohibited *Sati* within their jurisdiction much before the East India Company had taken any step against it. In 1772 some British officials and Christian missionaries had appealed in futile to the Government to stop this practice. In March 1799, William Carey witnessed a *Sati-rite* for the first time in his

life, and it shocked him terribly. After that, Mrityunjoy Vidyalankar, a great Sanskrit scholar, he declared in 1817 that the practice was completely voluntary and was by no means compulsory. On the subject of *Sahamarana* (burning oneself in the pyre of the husband) he said that, the *Shastras* varied, but they were all are one regarding the necessity of leading an ascetic life. He positively said that, there was nothing wrong in renouncing *Sankalpa* (determination to perform the rite) or in persuading a widow to renounce her *Sankalpa*. He asserted that, *Anumarana* (burning oneself in a separate pyre after hearing the news of one's husband's death) was purely voluntary and had no *Shastric* restriction behind it. Mrityunjoy Vidyalankar was the former, while he only adduced theoretically arguments but the later, the man was Raja Rammohun Roy successfully launched a strong agitation against that evil practice.¹⁰

In fact, Raja Rammohun Roy's attempts to reform society, religion and the status of women can be taken as the starting point of nineteenth century social reform movement in Bengal. In 1815 Rammohun Roy founded '*Atmiya Sabha*' ('an association for the dissemination of religious truth and the promotion of free discussion of theological subjects') in Calcutta and it took the shape of '*Brahmo Samaj*' on August 20, 1828. It was the culmination of the religious thought and activities of Rammohun Roy as well as it emerged as a major religious reform movement of the middle class educated Bengalis, based on the essential principle of monotheism. It also marked the beginning of the Brahmo movement. After Ramohun's death in 1833, the leadership of the Brahmo movement was taken over by Debendranath Tagore who provided the movement with a better organisational structure and ideological uniformity.¹¹ In 1838 Debendranath Tagore was converted to the Brahmo faith and he wanted to organize a society for attaining knowledge of Brahmo and for propagating religious truth, that is why he founded '*Tattvabodhini Sabha*' on October 6, 1839. In 1840 the '*The Tattvabodhini Sabha*' founded the *Tattvabodhini* School for educating young men in the principles of the new faith. Akshoy Kumar Dutta, a great scholar, a writer and a man of exceptional intellect, was appointed a teacher in that school. On August 16, 1843 Debendranath Tagore started the famous Bengali monthly '*Tattvabodhini Patrika*' with Akshoy Kumar Dutta as its editor. The objective of this *Patrika* were living in different parts of the province, familiar with its activities, to popularize Rammohun's works on

Brahmoism and to publish such matters as would enhance the knowledge of the people and were likely to promote their character.¹² From 1850, the '*Tattvabodhini Patrika*' was practically and virtually becoming the mouthpiece of the new spirit and articles began to be published advocating widow remarriage, women's education, denouncing early marriage, polygamy and intemperance and others.¹³

The Brahmo reform movement was in fact taken out of the limited elite circles of Calcutta literati into the district towns of East Bengal by Bijoykrishna Goswami and Keshab Chandra Sen in the 1860s. Keshab Chandra Sen brought in some amount of extremism into the movement, by attacking caste system, by focusing on the question of women's rights, by promoting widow remarriage, inter-caste marriages and by raising the issue of caste status of the Brahmo preachers, a position until then reserved for the Brahmans alone. But this radicalism also brought the first rift within the Brahmo movement. Meredith Borthwick has shown that, it was a schism between Keshab's followers, for whom social progress and reform were more important than anything else. On the other hand, the followers of Debendranath Tagore preferred to maintain their identification with Hindu society.¹⁴ In 1866, the followers of Keshab Chandra Sen established *Brahmo Samaj of India* and the followers of Debendranath Tagore retain their identity under the rubric of *Adi (Original) Brahmo Samaj*. The crises were more expanded when the 'Brahmo Marriage Act' passed in 1872 as Act III. It legalised Brahmo Marriages, which allowed inter-caste and widow marriage, but only if the contracting parties declared themselves to be non-Hindus.¹⁵

Progressive Young Brahmos became keenly interested in the education and emancipation of women. Some of them started the *Bamabodhini Patrika* for women and Keshab Chandra founded the *Society of Theistic Friends* with the object of discussing religious questions and working for women's education. A separate society for women named *Brahmika Samaj* (1865) was founded with Keshab Chandra as its Minister. He had also celebrated an inter-caste marriage and was pressing for this revolutionary social change which did not yet have the approval of Debendranath Tagore.¹⁶ Later Keshab Chandra Sen himself retreated from his radical position, condemned the act for promoting "God less marriages" and after that came closer to the Hindu austere Ramakrishna Paramahansa. This gradually led

to another rift in the Brahmo Samaj in 1878. When Keshab Chandra Sen arranges the marriage of his minor daughter named Suniti Devi with the Maharaja of Cooch Behar, his followers parted company and formed the *Sadharan Brahmo Samaj*. In 1881 Keshab Chandra Sen formed his '*Naba Bidhan*' (New Dispensation) and started moving towards a new universalist religion. But, by this time successive ideological rifts and organisational divisions had weakened the Brahmo movement confining it to a small elite group.¹⁷ It is true that, among the reformist organisations the Brahmo Samaj in Bengal, which was more modernist in its approach.

Brahmo Samaj in Bengal was weakened after the 1870s by internal dissent and divisions. This was followed by the emergence of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda movement in the 1880s. While Brahmo Samaj's appeal was to intellect that of Ramakrishna Paramhansa was to the mind of emotions. His disciple Swami Vivekananda believed that, women should be educated first and they should be conscious about their own position as well as to explore the mechanism of reform.¹⁸ Swami Vivekananda (Swamiji) was anxious for the emancipation of the Indian women. In his opinion ill-treatment of the women was one of the greatest sins of India. For their emancipation, he laid more emphasis on the growth of education and self-dependency among them then specific social reforms. Swamiji pointed out that "a bird with only one wing cannot fly. Similarly, a nation with her women in shackles can make no progress."¹⁹ Vivekananda drew attention to the very roots of social malaise and lent his authority to the cause of social reform. C. H. Heimsath writes, "Vivekananda's thought marked the culmination of the nineteenth century social revolt."²⁰

Thus, a new regeneration started in Bengal and women as a part of the society got the taste of progress and enlightenment. This trend became much more meaningful with the approach and involvement of elite society, a product of re-awakening of Indian society. In fact, a significant question hinted the mind of the Bengali intelligentsia class as to how the womenfolk could be modernized in all senses. In the nineteenth century some members of the *bhadralok* felt that, their self-respect was threatened by the continuous attack on evils innate in Hindu society. Questions about the position of women in Bengali society by representatives of the colonial power forced the cultural intermediaries, the *bhadralok* reformers, to direct

their attention to this issue. They found that, the position of women in the traditional household did not fit in early with the new set of values transmitted by the British in Bengal. An autonomous process of changing values made some of the *bhadralok* feel repugnance for those customs which seemed to degrade women. So, the *bhadralok* also responded to constant criticism by their colonial rulers, with mixed perceptions of responsibility and guilty, inferiority, and resentment. They had been made to feel that, unless they initiated some changes in their domestic lives they would be regarded as inferiors in the scale of civilisation.²¹

So, in the nineteenth century the “women question” gradually turns into “how can they be modernized”?²² This issue virtually drew the attention of the colonial Government and various devices were taken up to resolve the issue without many disturbances to the traditional faith and customs of the Indian society. Incidentally, James Mill, in his book “*History of British India*” (1826) argued that, women’s position could be used as an indicator of society’s advancement. Mill concluded: “nothing can exceed the habitual contempt which the Hindus entertain for their women They are held, accordingly, in extreme degradation.”²³

The goal of the male reformers was progress. Without social reform to considerably improve women’s status, regeneration seemed doomed to failure. Humiliated by their colonial status, Indians of the late nineteenth century were passionate with the issues of strength and power. They needed an explanation for the weakness that had led to their defeat and an answer to the question of how to build up their strength. If they accepted the nineteenth-century European theory that, the status of women was essential to the level and strength of civilization and the European conclusion that Indian customs were degrading to women’s status, they gained an explanation for their defeat and a instruction for reform.²⁴

The above suggestion leads us to think over the question of social reform in Bengal and the initiatives taken by Raja Rammohun Roy in this respect. He undertook the crusade to campaign against *Sati* which was the first women’s issue to receive public attention. The custom *Sati* where the women was burnt alive with her dead husband on the funeral pyre. Rammohun Roy attacked the practices of *Sati* on the basis of both appeals to humanitarian and natural rights doctrines as well as

Hindu *Shastras*, with an increasing shift to the latter. Cautious in approach, Rammohun based his arguments for social reform on scriptural authority. He hoped that, social reform would follow the growth of good sense among the people. The worst sufferers of the social degradation and inhuman social customs of the times were the women.²⁵

Rammohun propounded that, the sacrifice in most cases was due to influence or force on the part of greedy Brahmins and interested relatives. It was beneficial to the surviving relatives who inherited the property of the departed and spiritual bliss of the widow was not the main consideration.²⁶ He expressed the view that, *Sati* should be abolished. He published a number of tracts against *Sati*. In 1818 in his first tract he severely criticized the practice and argued that, the rite in its present form was not sanctioned by the *Shatras*. His arguments were sought to be counteracted by Kasinath Tarkavagish, an orthodox Sanskrit scholar. The second tract of Rammohun was published in 1819 and significantly its English translation was dedicated to Lady Hastings. In the tract he refuted the arguments of Kasinath Tarkavagish who had attempted to justify the practice by raising the question of *desachar* (long prevailing custom in the country). In 1820 Rammohun published his “*Brief Remarks Regarding Modern Encroachments on the Ancient Rights of Females According to The Hindu Law of Inheritance*”. In this tract Rammohun criticized the practice, analysing its economic implications and also defended some other fundamental rights of women. He emerged as a protagonist of women’s emancipation and as a humanitarian.²⁷

Lord Hastings was conscious of the need of abolishing *Sati* but he did not think it wise to take any immediate action. In 1823 the Government of India was asked by the Courts of Directors to consider the question of abolition again and was assured of its approval of any necessary measure. The Chief Judge of the Nizamat Adalat, Haringto, advocated its immediate abolition. When the orthodox Hindus filed petition against the Government restrictions on the practice, Rammohun submitted a counter-petition in which he forcefully challenged the controversy that *Sati*, as observed, was a religious performance. He declared that, “all these instances -----are murders according to every *Shatras*, as well as to the common sense of all nations”. He organised an anti-*Sati* awareness party whose members kept watch on

the different burning *ghats* to prevent any such sacrifice in defiance of Government restrictions.²⁸

Contemporary journals with progressive ideas also took up the cause. Rammohun's own paper *Sambad Kaumudi* was in the forefront and the missionary papers *Samachar Darpan* and the *Friend of India* also passionately supported the campaign for the abolition of *Sati*. Later, the weekly *Bagadut* edited by Nilratan Haldar also supported the movement.²⁹ But the orthodox community did not sit quiet. The "*Samachar Chandrika*" launched a campaign in favour of the continuance of the practice and also tried to mobilize public opinion in its favour. In this way, Bengali public opinion was sharply divided into two opposing groups on the question and feelings ran very high. The Christian missionaries of course supported the abolitionist movement with all their might and they also tried to rally public opinion in England against the practice. In this process Rammohun convinced the Government as to the necessity of immediate and total abolition of the practice. Lord Bentinck, the then Government General of Bengal went ahead with his plan and on December 4, 1829, Regulation XVII *Sati* was declared "illegal and punishable by the Criminal Courts". The abolition of *Sati* was great triumph of Raja Rammohun Roy and progressive public opinion in Bengal.³⁰

Social reform movement had achieved there by a great success and it encouraged other social reforms in all over the country. The role of Rammohun Roy and his followers of Brahma Samaj in the anti-*Sati* agitation was undoubtedly was his most significant contribution towards social reform. Rammohun's most important effort was also to establish of women rights in property. In 1823 Rammohun wrote an essay titled "*Hindu Narir Adhikare Anyay Hastakhep*"³¹ because it was very much linked with the system.

It may be noted that, as a consequence of the achievements of the Brahma Samaj as well as that of Raja Rammohun Roy and his followers they were started another phase of social reform movement in Bengal and this centred on the question of widow-remarriage. It is noticed in an account of one of the meetings of the *Atmiya Sabha* held in 1819 that, 'At the meeting in question.....the necessity of an infant widow passing her life in a state of celibacy, the practice of polygamy and of

suffering widows to burn with the corpse of their husbands were condemned.....'.³² Rammohun Roy pointed out in his tract on the '*Modern Encroachments on the Ancient Rights of Females according to the Hindu Law of Inheritance*, published in 1822, how Indian widows lived in a state of 'abject misery'.

It may be said that, the subject of the marriage of Hindu widows engaged the attention of Raja Rammohun Roy but its main protagonist was Pandit Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar. Though before Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar Young Bengal formed *Society for the Acquisition of General Knowledge* in 1838 and in that *Society* they criticized the ban on widow-remarriage.³³ The movement for the remarriage of widows was, however, gathering strength in Bengal under the leadership of Pandit Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar. Young Iswar Chandra found with his own eyes the evils of society and was pained by the decay and degeneration that had set in on the question of indignity to women. The terrible sufferings of the womenfolk, the immorality of the richer people, and the moral erosion of the people in general made a deep impression on the mind of Young Ishwar Chandra and gave him the will and courage to start a crusade against such social evil. The miserable condition of Hindu widows was one of the inhuman social customs to draw his attention. In August 1850, he wrote an article on the evils of early marriage in the *Sarvasubhakari Patrika* . In January, 1855, Vidyasagar wrote another pamphlet on 'Widow-marriage' (the English version of which is entitled 'Marriage of Hindu Widows') on the basis of a *sloka* which he found in the *Parasara Samhita* that was "A second marriage is sanctioned for women in five situation: if their (first) husbands be not heard of, if they die, retire from the world, prove to be eunuchs or become outcastes or patitas."³⁴ The pamphlet was a clear evidence of his great sympathy for the suffering womenfolk. It caused a stir in the country and started a heated controversy. Finally, J.P .Grant, a member of the Legislative Council, took great initiative in this matter and on July 26, the Act XV of 1856 was passed legalising marriage of widow by William Bentinck.³⁵

In this connection, Rani Bhavani, Zamindar in Rajshahi, was a farsighted lady. She was the first to realise that, Hindu widows should be remarried. Later on, Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar introduced it in Bengal. Tarasundari Debi, the daughter of Rani Bhavani became widow at her early age. Perhaps for this she took initiative

for widower marriage. On the other hand, in the year 1756, Raja Rajballabh of Dhaka tried to introduce widow marriage because his daughter became widow. Rani Bhavani and Raja Rajballabh placed the proposal of their daughters' marriage before the pundits (scholars). In those days the Brahmin pundits of Vikrampur, Dhaka and Nadia were the sole authorities of the Hindu society. But to Raja Krishnachandra, the king of Nadia, widow marriage was not valid according to the doctrine of the Hindu *Shastras*. Because of the opposition of Raja Krishnachandra it was not possible for the Rani Bhabani and Raja Rajballabh to introduce and implement the idea of widow remarriage. Yet, the proposal for widow remarriage showed their farsightedness for the cause of women emancipation during that period of time.³⁶ Under the president ship of T. B. Macaulay in 1837, the India commission gave their opinion of remarriage of the Hindu women of high families and urged the government to implement law in this regard. But the *Indian Dharma Sabha* (Religious Society of India) did not accept this opinion.

Rani Bhavani was kind enough to the widows. She offered monthly stipend to many widows. Rani Bhavani made a shelter for widows on the bank of the Ganges and made arrangements for their maintenance. These widows earned their living by spinning thread of the cotton produced in the country.³⁷

In 1841, an anonymous Maharastrian Brahman reformer had advocated remarriage of infant widows as a measure to control their sexuality and make their reproduction capacity socially useful. In 1866, Vishnushastri Pandit started a movement for the encouragement of widow-remarriage through the agency of the Widow Marriage Association, which was started at Bombay in 1865, while his opponents also formed a rival organisation in Maharashtra.³⁸ The prohibition on widow-remarriage became even more wide-spread and it became also a lower caste social practice, despite non-Brahman social reformer Jyotirao Phule's spirited attacks on enforced celibate widows. The reform movement of widow remarriage was started by Veerasalingam Pantulu in Madras presidency, who founded in 1878 a *Society for Social Reform* for this purpose. In 1891, a *Widow Remarriage Association* was formed with the patronage of the prominent citizens of the town. But this enthusiasm notwithstanding, by this time only three such marriages had been arranged by the reformers.³⁹

In Bengal, among certain sections in the orthodox Hindu society, *Kulinism* or polygamy was a much practiced vice. As early as 1822, Rammohun Roy had stressed that, the horrible practice of polygamy was directly contrary to the law prescribed by ancient authors.⁴⁰ After that, Pandit Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar continued his reform movement, directing it against polygamy and later child marriage and finally secured an 'Age of Consent Act' in 1860 that fixed the age of consent for the consummation of marriage at ten years for women.⁴¹ Side by side, Vidyasagar exposed the evils *Kulinism* and the extent to which it cripple society in his book on widow marriage. He found that, the evils of *Kulinism* and polygamy were inter-connected. A number of petitions against polygamy signed by Vidyasagar, the Maharajas of Burdwan, Nadia, Dinajpore, Rani Sarnomayee of Kassimbazar, Jaykrishna Mukherjee of Uttarpara and fifty thousand men and women of Bengal were submitted to the Government in 1856. These sought for Government legislation against polygamy "which was practiced on a very large scale in a manner the most offensive to mortality and decency". The Government appointed a committee with Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Digambar Mitra, Ramanath Tagore, Satyasan Ghosal and some other as members to recommend "the best means of giving practical effect to the wishes of the Government of India on the subject of restricting unlimited polygamy among Hindus in Bengal by legal enactment."⁴² In 1871, it was found that 33 *Kulin* Brahmins of Hooghly districts were married to 2151 women.⁴³ On 10 August 1871, Vidyasagar brought out his first book entitled *Consideration Whether Polygamy Should be Abolished*.⁴⁴ In fact, a turning point was approaching when polygamy would begin to be disgraced in Bengali social opinion. By the turn of the century, the practice was beginning to pass away, not through legislation but through the pressure of the influence of modern education and changing socio-economic climate.

But Christian missionaries were particularly vehement in their criticism of Bengali society. The main targets of their attack were those customs most obviously alien to British practice, such as *Sati* and polygamy, but they also strongly disapproved of *purdah* and the lack of education among women. After that, Rammohun also sharply criticized polygamy, child marriage, *Kulinism*, female infanticide and the evils of the dowry system. There were innumerable obstacles in

the way of improving their condition and effecting their resettlement. He published his “*Brief Remarks Regarding Modern Encroachments on the Ancient Rights of Females, according to the Hindu Law of Inheritance*”. In that he depicted the miserable life which Hindu widows had to lead in those days. In one of the issues of the *Sambad Kaumudi* he made “an appeal to the rich Hindus of Calcutta to constitute a society for the relief of destitute widows, upon the principles of the Civil and Military Widows Fund established by Order of Government”.⁴⁵ He opposed the polygamy that in his will he inserted a clause disinheriting any son or any other heir who was polygamous. These views of Rammohun only reveal his deep understanding of the problem of women’s emancipation.

Later in 1838 Young Bengal established the *Society for the Acquisition of General Knowledge*, where they discussed various aspects of western science and stood for a number of social reforms, such as the prohibition of caste taboos, child marriage, *Kulin* polygamy etc.⁴⁶ In 1873, a batch of young men, under the leadership of Nabakanta Chatterjee, formed a league or covenant to oppose child marriage and began to publish a monthly journal called *Mahapap Balya Bibaha* or ‘The Great Sin of Child Marriage.’⁴⁷ In 1877 some young progressive Brahmos organised something like a secret league, one of their pledges being ‘never to encourage marriage between young men below twenty-one and girls below sixteen’.⁴⁸ The controversy fore-grounded the issue of infant marriage. A series of tragedies occurred in Bengal, including in 1890 the death of 10 year-old Phulmonee due to marital rape by her 35 year-old husband, Hari Mohan Maity.⁴⁹ In this respect, it may be mentioned that, Behramji M. Malabari, a Parsi reformer, formulated his *Notes on Infant Marriage and Enforced Widowhood*, both of which he rightly considered to be related social evils. He circulated these notes to important Government officials and public men for their opinion in these matters. At first he did not want State interference for any legislation but sought its moral support.⁵⁰ Finally, regarding the child marriage, the age of consent for the consummation of marriage was raised ten to twelve by legislation on 19 March, 1891 as Act X of 1891.⁵¹ But as census statistics show, child marriage continued to be a widely practiced social custom among all the castes, high and low alike.

According to Swami Vivekananda (previously known as Narendra Nath Dutta), “Reformation in Hinduism means widow-marriage and women liberation so on”. But this reformation would not touch the whole society, specially the poor people or weaker section. He strongly criticized widow marriage reform movement which was abolished by the Government law whenever the whole society would be enlightened with education, then the social evils are subject to be eradicated. He laid emphasis on universal education irrespective of any caste, sex and religion.⁵²

The women question as well as the social reform movement of Bengal got an extraordinary impetus with the spread of education particularly the measures taken by the Christian missionaries. They were especially concerned about the position of women because they saw them as playing a major role in conversion. As mothers, women were the formative influence on the next generation. It could be converted and this was possible to visualise the gradual conversion of the whole of Bengal.

In 1807 first women’s school was opened for Indian Christian girls in Serampore by Hanna Marshman, wife of Rev. Marshman. In 1809 girls school in Calcutta Boubazar Benevolent Institute and in 1818 Janbazar Free School Institute established for girls of without fees. The Christian missionaries were, of course, keen to educate native girls and one of the earliest efforts in this direction was made by Padri Robert May Who founded a girls’ school at Chinsurah in 1814. The *School Society* founded in 1817, also discussed the question of female education. In April 1819, on the initiative of some Baptist missionaries was founded the *Calcutta Female Juvenile Society* with Reverend W. H. Pearce as its president. It took the initiative and started the first girls’ school for the general public of Bengal in 1819 at Gouri Bari (Ultadanga), a suburb of Calcutta. A number of girls’ schools were founded in Calcutta in 1821 under the auspices of the society like ‘Liverpool School’ at Shyambazar, ‘Salem School’ at Janbazar and ‘Burmingham School’ at Chitpur and Raja Radhakanta Deb was one of its chief patrons. He published a book on ‘Female Education’ (*Stri-siksha-vidhayak*), written by Pandit Gourmohun Vidyalkar in 1822, to the society, which did much to give an impetus to women’s education during the six years of its existence. A Governmental Gazette was published in 22nd December, 1823 and it showed that 140 girls’ of both Hindu and Muslim participated in examination of that schools.⁵³

In 1821 some members of the *Calcutta School Society*, succeeded in moving the British and *Foreign School Society of London* to send out Miss Mary Anne Cooke to Calcutta to promote women's education. Miss Cooke started her work under the *Church Missionary Society* and within a year, as many as twenty two girls' schools were founded.⁵⁴

The Ladies Society for Native Female Education under the patronage of Lady Amherst was founded in 1824 and took over the management of the girls' schools run by the *Church Missionary Society*. David Hare was its active supporter and under the guidance of Mrs. Wilson about thirty girls' schools were managed by the society in Calcutta and other parts of Bengal. A central school for girls was started by the *Ladies Society* in Calcutta in 1826. The Christian missionaries also ran boarding establishments for orphans and made arrangements for domestic teaching in upper class families. A notable advocate of women's education was Reverend Krishna Mohan Banerjee whose essay on 'Native Female Education' had won a prize of Rs. 200 and high praise. But with all their efforts the Christian missionaries failed to draw girls from middle class families to their schools. The majority of the girls who came to them for education belonged to the lower classes or to Christian families, quite a few came to school lured by hopes of getting clothes, ornaments or their incentives. The main problem in missionary education was its insistence on instruction which seemed to betray a positive motive behind the programme of enlightenment.⁵⁵

In the first decade of the nineteenth century the efforts made by Serampore Missionary for spread of women education in Bengal is remarkable. In 1809, they started their journey to open a separate branch for 40 girls' students. In 1819, William Carey established a girls' school at Serampore. With in 1824 they established 12 girls' school at Serampore and also founded two schools at Birbhum, two at Dhaka and four at Chattagram. But most of these schools were closed in 1838 for economic crisis.⁵⁶

In that period, beside missionaries many foreigners personally took considerable interest for the spread of women education. David Hare was one of them. In 1829, he established a school. But the lack of female students the school

was closed within few years. But he was active supporter of supporter of *Ladies Society* and engaged himself with the activities of women education. With interest he was present in the school of several examinations. For keen interest in women education after his death in 1844 'Hare Prize Fund' was started for his honour. Best essay writers about women education was awarded from this fund.⁵⁷

Side by side, with the Christian missionaries and foreign personality some Bengali intelligentsia and enlightened personalities came forward to spread up the movement for modern education in Bengal. In this respect, one may recall the contributions of Raja Rammohun Roy, the spiritual father of the Bengal Renaissance, who appeared as 'the herald of a new age' was a strong advocate of the cause of female education in India. Pandit Shivnath Shastri comments in 'The Women of India' that, 'have found no greater defender of their rights than the founder of Brahmoism. He defended the legal rights of women, advocated their right to education and enlightenment' and 'above all, devoted all the energies of his noble soul to save them from a cruel death'.⁵⁸

But in case of women education the contribution of Pandit Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar is most important who once took up the cause of widow remarriage and now turn his attention towards women education. One of the important features of women's emancipation in the nineteenth century was female education. Till the last day of his life Vidyasagar took much interest in the education of women and patronized the *Strisiksha Vidhayini Sammilani*, branches of which were founded in different districts of Bengal to promote the female education. Vidyasagar, while working as the Government Inspector of Schools of Nadia, Hoogly, Burdwan and Midnapore, organized in all forty girls school and twenty model schools in the districts. Vidyasagar continued to take great interest in women's education and was associated with the foundation of a number of girls schools in the province including one at Birsingha village (birth place), Midnapore.⁵⁹ The foundation of the *Hindu Balika Vidyalaya* (later known as Bethune school) in 7th May, 1849 on the initiative of J. E. Drinkwater Bethune, Legal Member of the Governor General's Council and President of the Council of Education, created great enthusiasm in society and the institution came in for both criticism and appreciation. Vidyasagar was the first secretary of the school. Bethune and Vidyasagar devoted much time, energy and

resource to the running of the *Vidyalyaya*. On the two sides of the school carriage was written a Sanskrit *sloka* which means: “The girls also should be brought up and educated with great care.”⁶⁰

Vidyasagar was eagerly interested in the development of vernacular education. In 1853 Vidyasagar founded a free Anglo-Sanskrit school at Birsingha, his native village and encouraged similar efforts in other districts of Bengal. A significant achievement of Vidyasagar was the development of the Metropolitan Institution which was later named after him. Vidyasagar wanted nothing short of complete education for the students, education that would free their minds from prejudice, superstition and inhibitions. To him it was the most powerful weapon for fighting social malaise.⁶¹ Vidyasagar was undoubtedly influenced by both Eastern and Western ideas. He realised the need of a strong base for a really good education. That is why he wrote text-books for school students which have been invaluable for generations. He was one of the makers of the Bengali language. In fact, social reform and Vidyasagar are synonyms in the history of Bengal and all his social or other activities bore the stamp of his manliness and greatness.⁶²

For the sake of modern education of Bengal the contributions of Young Bengal group are also praiseworthy. Because it's sufficiently stepped-up the process of modern education initiated by the Christian missionaries. It may be known to all that who were the Derozians. The most remarkable personality of the nineteenth century was Henry Louise Vivian Derozio (1809-1831). The students of the Derozio were known as Derozians or Young Bengal group. They were the most brilliant students of the Hindu college and were inspired and excited by a spirit of free thought and revolt against the existing social and religious structure of the Hindu society. Their mission seems to have been to expose Hinduism, to denounce it unequivocally. The Derozians were very much conscious about the superstitions and backwardness of the Indian society. Naturally, they picked up the issues stood on the way of progress. They first of all laid emphasis on Western education vis-a-vis eradication of social evils that prevailed in India and Bengal in particular hampering the progressive mode of society of Bengal.⁶³ In this issue they initially tried to draw the attention of the people through media and newspaper.

In fact, quite a few journals were run by the Derozians between 1828 and 1843 to give wider currency to their views and principles. Among their journals *Parthenon* advocated the cause of colonisation and female education. Hindu orthodoxy and superstition were condemned. Another most important journal named *The Bengal Spectator*, Ramgopal Ghosh one of the founders of the paper wrote in a letter that its object was to “keep up a spirit of enquiry amongst the educated natives and to discuss such subjects as female education, the remarriage of Hindoo widows etc. It is in short to be our peculiar organ.”⁶⁴ *Hindu Pioneer*, published in 1835, was one of the main party organs of the Young Bengal group. It incorporated an essay titled ‘on women’ which emphasized for the women of the necessity of human recognition. It is stated that, the male folk seems to have the main responsibility for the establishment of the women’s right, education and the full fledged development of women. Because, development of women was much needed for the men’s fulfilment or progress. So, instead of making them a mere play thing of the men, the men should give the equal status to the women. Human beings are not made for the *Shastras*, *Shastras* are created for the need of the human being.⁶⁵ Based on this perception the Young Bengal group aimed at establishing the saga of women achievements. Because they realised that, the progressive force of a society rooted in the women’s development. Pushing the women back would inevitably lead to the backwardness of our society as a whole.

Female education in Bengal and India as well was a myth in the early nineteenth century to common people except a few very aristocratic families who has private arrangement within their compound. Educated aristocratic families were not in favour to sending their daughters in school for education. Beside social reform and restriction of *purdah* system, they did not like Christian ideology based missionary education. On the other hand, educated aristocratic society seemed to dishonour to read their daughter with lower class girls. They arranged *zenana* education system for their girls and wives.⁶⁶ Though Radhakanta Deb was the supporter of women education but did not agree to send the daughter of upper class families in school. His impression was that, it would be better women could take up *zenana* education to comply with the tradition of Bengali patriarchy. He also took several steps in his own house for the spread of female education.⁶⁷

Before we saw that, in the first half of the nineteenth century the missionaries were the main organiser of female education. But gradually, the female education was inspired by some social reformers with the financial help of some indigenous rich person and sometimes, established private schools with the help of the Government. We have discussed before about the contribution of missionaries and social reformers in the field of the development of female education. Now, we will specially discuss about the indigenous personalities mainly the zamindars and the private schools established by the grant of Government who played a major role in the development of female education. In the third decade of nineteenth century the most famous Bengali personalities were Raja Baidyanath Roy, Maharaja Shibkrishna Bahadur, Maharaja Kalikrishna Bahadur, Gourmohun Vidyalkar, Dwarakanath Tagore, Prasanna Kumar Tagore, Chandicharan Tarkalankar, Moti Lal Seal, Haladhar Mallik, Babu Kalinath Ray Chowdhury, Baikunta Nath Ray Chowdhury, Bhavani Prasad Ray etc. who showed their interest in female education. Raja Baidyanath Roy is said to have donated Rs. twenty thousand for the development of 'Central Female School' which was established in 1826 by the impetus of *Ladies Society*.⁶⁸

With missionary and limited Government assistance in female education also added indigenous enthusiasm in the middle stage of the nineteenth century and gradually indigenous efforts became the main thing. Among such personalities two famous zamindars of Uttarpara, Joykrishna Mukherjee and Rajkrishna Mukherjee⁶⁹ at first took the step in establishing girls' school. In 1845 they gave a proposal to Council of Education for the establishment of a girls' school. They requested to the Government to take half responsibility of the school on the condition the rest will be bear by themselves. But the Government rejected their proposal in 1849 by showing financial crisis. In the meantime, the first girls' school was established in 1847 with the initiatives of Kalikrishna Mitra, Pyaricharan Sarkar and Nabakrishna Mitra at Barasat.⁷⁰

Before we already mentioned about the Bethune School. For this school Dakshina Ranjan Mukhopadhyay denoted five *bigha* lands at Mirzapur, one thousand rupees and books of five thousand rupees for the library. Vidyasagar took the responsibility as secretary of the school in free of cost (1850-1869). Raja

Kalikrishna Bahadur became the president of the managing committee. Bethune himself took all the financial responsibilities of the school. He denoted all his properties to the school. Madanmohan Tarkalankar helped Bethune through collection of the girls' student from aristocratic families. He admitted his two daughters Bhubanmala and Kundamala in the school. In 1850, in the second edition of '*Sravasubhakari Patrika*', he wrote an essay on female education in which he opposed all the proposals against female education and presented his argument on this. Maharshi Debendra Nath Tagore got his eldest daughter Saudamini Devi (1847-1920) admitted into the Bethune School in July 1851. For this reason, in 1851 the number of girls' student increased from 21 to 80. Hence, for the first time Bengali aristocratic families broke their traditional barriers by sending their daughters in Bethune School and they institutionally acknowledged the female education.⁷¹

In the beginning Radhakanta Deb though was the supporter of female education but was not agreeing to send the girls' outside of home. But, in the sixties of the century changed his mind. He supported '*Calcutta Female School*'. In that time Joykrishna Mukherjee and Rajkrishna Mukherjee established a female school at Uttarpara. Besides that, '*Uttarpara Hitakari Sabha*' (1863) founded by the impetus of Joykrishna Mukherjee at Burdwan played an important contribution in spreading female education. This association arranged *zenana* education for aged women.⁷²

In the last part of the nineteenth century through several scholarships provided by the Government and some private enterprise inspired women for higher education and that was also a turning point for the cause of women education in colonial Bengal. But in 1897 personally Begum Firdous Mahal, the Nawab of Murshidabad started to give gold Medel for girls' student who were supposed to take stand first in order of merit in the entrance examination. Besides that, several scholarships were started in the name of different personalities. For example, in 1891 'Mohitbala Prize' was started in Bethune School by private initiative who would stand first place in the entrance examination. After the death of Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar (1891) some highly educated women who were his followers started *Vidyasagar Scholarship* in 1895. Incidentally, it is still going on till date.⁷³

On the other hand, from the second decade of the nineteenth century the female education started in Calcutta and other places of Bengal. Before that, when women education was prohibited in the Muslim society and *purdah* system was strictly maintained in that period an unknown Muslim women educationist of Shyambazar, Calcutta did active co-operation to an English educationist named Miss Cook for the spread and propagation of women education. She took enough initiatives for collection of girls students from door to door, established a school in his own place etc. During this time many Muslim people and their family did co-operation for the establishment of school for women education in Calcutta at Mirzapur, Entaly, Janbazar etc.⁷⁴ But actually from the sixties of the nineteenth century many schools were established to boost up female education in East Bengal by the private enterprise. In East Bengal mainly Muslim dominated society virtually got the importance of modern education after 1870. In this respect, Nawab Foyjunnesa Choudhurani, the zaminder of Pachimgaon, Comilla (1847-1903) took sufficient efforts in the institutional education for Muslim girls. She founded two separate primary girls' schools for secluded women at Comilla town in 1873 - one on the west side of Nanuadighi of Comilla and the other on the shore of Kandi *dighi*. It may be recalled in this respect that, she even founded a hostel with the first one and it is also to be known that she started a monthly scholarship for female students. In 1873, the school established on the shore of Kandi with the name of Foyjunnesa. Though this school was founded as a primary school, but she promoted it to a Junior high school (up to class eight) in 1889 after receiving the award of 'Nawab'.⁷⁵ She gave the chance to read for all level of girls of the society by starting education in Bengali language. Not only the Muslims, all the girls from different religion got the opportunities to learn in that school. Besides that, in 1876 Ananda Charan Khastagir founded a Middle English Girls School at Chattagaon which still maintains high standard as Dr. Khastagir Girls High School.

In 1897, an autonomous school for Muslim girls was founded in Calcutta with the patronage of Nawab Shamsi Jahan Firdous Mahal, the Zamindar of Murshidabad. It was basically a Madrasa. Nawab gave the financial support for the establishment of school building and its responsibility for expanses she declared one hundred fifty rupees as grant per month. Aahsanullah, the Nawab of Dhaka also

donated one thousand rupees for this school. It is said that, about 46 students got admitted in the school in 1898.⁷⁶

In the last two decades of nineteenth century some poets and intelligent persons appeared in the Muslim community and some of them threw light on the necessity of female education. Amongst them, Abdul Latif in 1878 and Nousher Ali Khan Usufjaye in 1890 presented the necessity of female education through their writings.⁷⁷ Specially, from the eight decades of the nineteenth century the situation of the Muslim women in society was being improved by giving importance to female education. In that period, Sheikh Abdullah of Aligarh was the main speaker and initiator of institutional education for Muslim women. Moulavi Abdul Hakim said in the *Bengal Social Association* in 1868 that, the honourable Prophet Muhammed instructed that, “education is necessary for women as well as men”.⁷⁸ By the initiative of Sir Saiyad Ahmed women education was spread in several places of all over India. Amir Ali, one of the reformers of Muslim community admitted the necessity of women education in the last year of the nineteenth century. He commented in *All Indian Educational Conference* in 1899 that, girls’ education should run in parallel way with the boys’ which was held in Calcutta. But his activities were limited in the dialogues and discussions in the public platforms only.⁷⁹ After that, “*Bangiya Pradeshi Mussalman Siksha Samiti*” established on 15th February, 1903 by the president ship of Amir Ali. This association propagated the necessity of establishment of girls’ school and the spread of women education.⁸⁰

In Bengal the development of female education in nineteenth century actually happened with the initiatives of private concerns. Although the efforts and favour of the colonial Government can’t be side lined. In that period, many people of our country realised the importance of primary education for female by the efforts of missionary, some foreign great personalities and progressive liberal social reformers and others. But, the number of women in higher studies was very much poor in that century. Yet, a very few women became conscious as a human about their degraded position by learning and self-establishment through the consciousness of womanhood.

It is true that, reform was readily taken up at a theoretical level. Within the set limits of the wife-mother role, the 'improvement' of the position of women was a relatively safe issue that did not present a vision of imminent social chaos. It implied some changes in domestic arrangements, but not necessarily in social relationships. The '*Strishiksha Bidhayak*' stressed that, women's education did not mean greater freedom of behaviour, nor did it override a women's primary duty to her husband. It was assumed that, women would only be interested in education to enhance their wife-mother role. Women's emancipation gradually became a matter of self-interest, as the *bhadralok* internalized new social norms under the influence of British rule.⁸¹

There were also indigenous reasons promoting reform. Many of the advocates of reform were from high-caste *Kulin* Brahmin groups whose numbers were declining. Their practice of *Kulin* polygamy, by which many women were widowed from childhood or only nominally married to men with whom they never cohabited, left a large number of women barren. The custom of *Sati* and the ban on widow-remarriage contributed to this demographic change.⁸²

It is a fact that, women's status became the main focus of the reforming activities of the colonial state as well as of the educated Indians. To a large extent it was the result of a comparative civilizational discourse of the colonial period. It means when civilizations were ranked, one of the major criteria was the position of women and it was here that, the Indians were increasingly under attack by the western observers, from missionaries to civilians. This gender question was a key issue for James Mill condemning Indian civilization in his seminal work *The History of British India*. So, the Indian intelligentsia also responded to this civilizational critique by advocating and supporting reforms to improve the status of women in Indian society. Another response of the educated Indian elite to such civilizational critiques was to reform Hinduism from within in the light of post-enlightenment rationalism. This phenomenon is often been celebrated in the older historiography as the "Bengal Renaissance" or the "Nineteenth Century Indian Renaissance."⁸³ So, it is a reflection and reaction against attitudes of the western scholars who ever criticized the Indian society because of the disgrace position of women. It seems to have stimulated the intellectual pursuit of some educated elites who perceived the

flaws of the Indian society and took up steps to reform it focusing the women issues from various dimensions.

Notes and References

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2. Meredith Borthwick, *The Changing Role of Women in Bengal 1849-1905*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey (U.S.A),1985, p. 26.
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6. Meredith Borthwick, *op.cit.* p. 26.

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23. Geraldine Forbes, *Loc.cit.*
24. Geraldine Forbes, *op.cit.* p. 30.
25. Nemai Sadhan Bose, *op.cit.* p. 42. Raja rammohun Roy attacked social evils 'in the name of universal moral law, which for him was Western moral law,' and that 'the action on Sati represented the imposition of Western values on Indian Society.' See Dilip Kumar Chattopadhyay, *op.cit.* p. 206.
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27. Kali Kinkar Datta, *op. cit.* pp. 254-255; see also Nemai Sadhan Bose, *op.cit.* p. 201.
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31. Pulinbihari Sen, et al (eds.), *Rammohun-Smaran* (in Bengali), Raja Rammohun Roy Smriti Raksha Committee, Calcutta, March 1989, p. 199.
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34. *The Bengal Spectator*, May 1842; also in Binoy Ghosh, *Banglar Samajik Itihaser Dhara 1800-1900 (Samayik Patre Banglar Samaj Chitra*, Vol. V), Pathbhaban, Calcutta, November 1968, pp. 286-287; Dilip Kumar Chattopadhyay, *op.cit.* pp. 211 and 217.

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36. Moksudur Rahaman, *Natorer Maharani Bhavani* (in Bengali), Rajshahi, 1988, p. 9; also in Nishith Ranjan Roy (ed.), *Rani Bhabani* (written by Akshay Kumar Maitreya), Sahityalok, Kolkata, First Pub. January 1990, Third Edition- December 2007, pp. 134-135. Raja Rajballabh consulted the learned pundits of Dravida, Tailanga, Banaras, Mithila and several other places, whom Raja Rajballabh consults, first referred to the *sloka* in the *Parasara Samhita*. See Kali Kinkar Datta, *op.cit.* p. 277; also in Dilip Kumar Chattopadhyay, *op.cit.* pp. 210-211.

37. Samar Pal, *Natorer Itihas* (in Bengali), Vol. 1, Natore, Bangladesh, 1980, p.2; see also by S. M. Rabiul Karim, *Rajshahi Zamindars: A Historical Profile in the Colonial Period (1765-1947)*, an unpublished thesis, University of North Bengal, pp.115-116 .

38. Kali Kinkar Datta, *op.cit.* pp. 303-304. In 1870, the reformers suffered a setback when in a public debate in Poona, they were found to be at fault by Sankaracharya of Kabir Math and many of them accepted the ritual of penance.

39. Kali Kinkar Datta, *op.cit.* pp. 305-307; see also Sekhar Bandyopadhyay, *op.cit.* p.149.
40. Dilip Kumar Chattopadhyay, *op.cit.* p. 218.
41. Sekhar Bandyopadhyay, *Loc.cit.*
42. R. C. Majumdar, *op.cit.* pp. 68-69; see also Kali Kinkar Datta, *op.cit.* pp. 346-351; Nemaï Sadhan Bose, *op.cit.* pp.216-217.
43. Usha Chakraborty, *op.cit.*, p. 8.
44. Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar published his second book containing views against polygamy on 9 April 1873. Rashbehary Mukhopadhyay of Vikrampur in East Bengal, though himself a polygamist, had, however, fully realised the harmful effects of polygamy and strongly supported Vidyasagar in his zealous efforts to abolish it. To this end he wrote two books, entitled *Ballai Samsodhini* (1868) and *Kaulinya Samsodhini* (1871) and composed some songs which were in wide circulation in East Bengal. See Kali Kinkar Datta, *op.cit.* p. 353.
45. Nemaï Sadhan Bose, *op.cit.* pp. 206-207.
46. Sekhar Bandyopadhyay, *op.cit.* p. 146.
47. Kali Kinkar Datta, *op.cit.* p. 317.
48. Kali Kinkar Datta, *Loc.cit.*
49. ‘Girl-Brides and Sociological Change: Age of Consent Bill (1891) Controversy’, an article by Meera Kosambi in *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 26, No. 31-32, 1991, pp. 1857-68; see also in detail Tanika Sarkar, *Hindu Wife, Hindu Nation-Community, Religion, and Cultural Nationalism*, Permanent Black, Delhi, 2001, pp.191-249; Swapan Basu (Compiled and Edited), *op.cit.* pp. 211-212; ‘Social Reform in Colonial Bengal: Revisiting Vidyasagar’, an article by Manmay Zafar in *Philosophy and Progress*, Vols. LV-LVI, January-June, July-December, 2014, ISSN 1607-2278 (Print), p.116.
50. Behramji M. Malabari, born at Baroda in 1853. He came to Bombay at the age of fifteen where he received encouragement from the Head Master, Rev. William

Dixon, in 1868 to appear at the entrance or Matriculation Examination. He wrote in one of his *Notes*: ‘It is a pity that some of my friends are still harping upon “Government interference”. I want no such thing. It is cooperation from the state, and not coercion, that society stands in need of. And I am glad to find that such cooperation will not be withheld if duly applied for’. *The Indian Magazine and Review* brought to public notice the discussions which Malabari had started on the question of early marriage and reform. On 11 June 1890, Malabari published an appeal on behalf of the Daughters of India. See Kali Kinkar Datta, *op.cit.* pp. 318-332; also in Swapan Basu (Compiled and Edited), *op.cit.* pp. 214-215.

51. Usha Chakraborty, *op.cit.* p. 6; see also R. C. Majumdar, *op. cit.* p. 69; Kali Kinkar Datta, *op.cit.* p. 332; Sekhar Bandyopadhyay, *op.cit.* p. 149.

52. Amulyabhushan Sen, *Vivekanander Itihas Chetana* (in Bengali), Basu Nandi And Co. Kolkata, 1372 (B.S), pp.92-93.

53. R. C. Majumdar, *op.cit.* pp. 56-60; see also Usha Chakraborty, *op.cit.* Calcutta, 1963, pp. 65-66; Kali Kinkar Datta, *op. cit.* pp.106-112; Dilip Kumar Chattopadhyay, *op. cit.* pp. 225-228; ‘Unish Satake Banglai Narisiksha’, an article by Arifa Sultana in *Itihas Samiti Patrika*, Sharifullah Bhuinya (ed.), Sankha 25-26, 1406-1408, Bangladesh Itihas Samiti, January, 2002, pp.139-140.

54. Jogesh Chandra Bagal, *Women Education in Eastern India*, Calcutta, 1956, pp.23-24; see also Usha Chakraborty; *op.cit.* p.45.

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57. Gitashreebandana Sengupta, *Spandito Antarlok-Atmucharite Nari Pragatir Dhara* (in Bengali), Progressive Publishers, Kolkata, 1999, p.67; see also Kali Kinkar Datta, *op. cit.* p. 120.

58. Kali Kinkar Datta, *op. cit.* p. 111.

59. Kali Kinkar Datta, *op. cit.* pp. 153-154; see also Nemai Sadhan Bose, *op.cit.* pp. 222-223.
60. R. C. Majumdar, *op.cit.* pp. 64-67; see also Jogesh Chandra Bagal, *Vidyasagar Parichay* (in Bengali), Kolkata, 1960, pp. 46-47; Kali Kinkar Datta, *op. cit.* p. 149; Dilip Kumar Chattopaduyay, *op. cit.* pp. 232-233; Ghulam Murshid, *Reluctant Debutante: Response of Bengali Women to Modernization, 1849-1905*, Sahitya Samsad, Rajshahi University, Rajshahi, 1983, pp. 32-33.
61. Brojendranath Bandyopadhyay, *Kalikata Sanskrito Colleger Itihas* (in Bengali), Vol.1, Calcutta, 1948, pp. 56-57.
62. Indra Mitra, *Karunasagar Vidyasagar* (in Bengali), Calcutta, 1969, p. 266.
63. Amar Dutta, *Derozio O Derozians* (in Bengali), Progressive Publishers, Kolkata, First published 1973, Third Edition- January 2002, pp.41-46.
64. Amar Dutta, *op.cit.* pp. 76 and 92; see also Kali Kinkar Datta, *op. cit.* p. 137; Nemai Sadhan Bose, *op.cit.* pp.81-82.
65. Amar Dutta, *op.cit.* p.87.
66. Geraldine Forbes, *op.cit.* p. 39.
67. Jogesh Chandra Bagal, *Banglar Stree Siksha* (in Bengali), Kolkata, 1357 B.S. p. 4.
68. Kali Kinkar Datta, *op. cit.* pp. 132-133; also in 'Unish Satake Banglai Narisiksha', an article by Arifa Sultana in *Itihas Samiti Patrika*, Sharifullah Bhuinya (ed.), Sankha 25-26, 1406-1408, Bangladesh Itihas Samiti, January, 2002, pp. 143-144.
69. Zamindar Jaykrishna Mukherjee and his brother Rajkrishna Mukherjee were well-known for their philanthropy and patronage of public causes *Uttarpara Hitakari Sabha* was one of them, established on 5th April (Sunday), 1863. See Nilmani Mukherjee, *A Bengal Zamindar, Jaykrishna Mukherjee of Uttarpara and His Times 1808-1888*, Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyay, Calcutta, 1975, pp. 83-84.

70. Kali Kinkar Datta, *op. cit.* pp. 137 and 143; see also Dilip Kumar Chattopadhyay, *op. cit.* p. 232; ‘Unobingso Satabdir Prathambhage Bangladeshe Stree-sikshar Bistar Sambandhe Dui-Ekti Bhabna’, an article by Mallika Banerjee, in *Itihase Nari: Siksha* (in Bengali), Paschimbanga Itihas Sangsad, Bethune College, Kolkata, 2001, p.49.
71. Debendra Nath Tagore wrote to Rajnarayan Basu, and then posted at Midnapore: ‘I have sent Saudamini to Bethune Sahib’s *Balika Vidyalaya*; let me see the reaction of such an example’. Kali Kinkar Datta, *op. cit.* pp.141-149 and 166; also in Dilip Kumar Chattopadhyay, *op. cit.* pp. 233-235.
72. Nilmani Mukherjee, *op.cit.* pp. 153-156.
73. Maleka Begum, Saiyad Ajijul Hoque, *Ami Nari- Tinsho Bacharer Bangali Narir Itihas* (in Bengali), Dhaka, 2001, p.83.
74. Maleka Begum, *Banglar Nari Andolon* (in Bengali), University Press Limited, Dhaka, 2002, p. 38.
75. Roushan Ara Begum, *Nawab Foyjunnesa O Purbabanger Muslim Samaj* (in Bengali), Bangla Academy, Dhaka, June, 1993, p.46; see also Maleka Begum, Saiyad Ajijul Hoque, *op.cit.* p.46; ‘Unish Satake Banglai Narisiksha’, an article by Arifa Sultana in *Itihas Samiti Patrika*, Sharifullah Bhuinya (ed.), Sankha 25-26, 1406-1408, Bangladesh Itihas Samiti, January, 2002, p. 163.
76. Sonia Nishat Amin, *The World of Muslim Women in Colonial Bengal 1876-1939*, Brill, Leiden, 1996, p.147.
77. Anisujjaman, *Muslim Manas O Banglar Sahitya 1757-1918* (in Bengali), Dhaka University, 1964, pp. 289 and 424.
78. Maleka Begum, *op.cit.* p. 38.
79. Kali Kinkar Datta, *op.cit.* pp. 385-386; see also Roushan Ara Begum, *op.cit.* p. 45.
80. Maleka Begum, *op.cit.* p. 44.
81. Meredith Borthwick, *op.cit.* p. 39.

82. Meredith Borthwick, *op.cit.* p. 37.

83. Sekhar Bandyopadhyay, *op.cit.* pp. 150-151.