

**EDUCATION OF WOMEN IN THE  
PRESIDENCY OF BENGAL IN THE  
NINETEENTH CENTURY**

Dissertation submitted to the Jawaharlal Nehru University  
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the  
award of the degree of

**MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY**

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1984**

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DECLARATION

Certified that this dissertation entitled  
"Education of Women in the Presidency of Bengal in the  
Nineteenth Century" submitted by Mr. Gagan Kumar Dhal,  
is in fulfilment of eight credits out of the total  
requirements of twenty four credits for the Degree of  
Master of Philosophy of this University. This is his original  
work to the best of our knowledge and has not been previously  
submitted for any other degree of this or any other  
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This dissertation may now be placed before the  
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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I am deeply indebted to my Supervisor, Professor Suresh Chandra Ghosh, for his profound concern in guiding the present work. His constructive suggestions, critical comments and prompt help at the various stages of writing this dissertation have been of tremendous help to me in completing the work in time. I have also learnt much from his strict adherence to the methodological aspect of research during the progress of this work.

I express my sense of indebtedness to Dr. Mallar Ghosh, now with the University of Calcutta, who has provided me the initial momentum to pursue the present work seriously.

I am grateful to the University which has offered me a Junior Research Fellowship to undertake this work.

My gratitude is also due to the faculty members of the Zakir Husain Centre for Educational Studies, especially Professor Tapas Majumdar, Dr. Veeraraghavan, Dr. Karuna Ahmad, Dr. Narindar Singh, the present Chairman, and Dr. B.M. Sankhdher for their encouragement from time to time.

I am thankful to all my classmates for helping me throughout. Particularly I must thank Nandita, Namita, Mridula, Yasmin, Gouri, Jayanti, Tripathy for their pleasant and intellectual company. In this context, I must specially thank my senior classmates, Ashiko Henia, who from time to time enquired about my work and made valuable suggestions

for its improvement. While thanking them, I do not want to belittle the encouragement provided to me by my friends, Dambu, Chandrabhan, Biraja, Subrat, Golak, Rabi etc. throughout the period of my work.

I am also thankful to Bajaj, Chandrika and Veena who have extended their cooperation in typing out this dissertation.

Finally to my parents and uncles, I owe my deepest gratitude knowing fully well that a formal expression of acknowledgement would not suffice for their love and affection which has been the main source of inspiration for me.

Gagan Kumar Dhal  
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## CONTENTS

	Page No.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	
CHAPTER-I - INTRODUCTION	1 - 9
CHAPTER-II - MISSIONARY CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS THE GROWTH OF THE EDUCATION OF WOMEN	10 - 48
CHAPTER-III - THE CONTRIBUTION OF INTELLIGENTSIA IN INDIA. TOWARDS THE PROMOTION OF EDUCATION OF WOMEN	49 - 83
CHAPTER-IV - THE POLICY OF THE COMPANY AND THE CROWN TOWARDS THE EDUCATION OF WOMEN	84 - 130
CHAPTER-V - CONCLUSION	131 - 136
BIBLIOGRAPHY	137 - 142

## CHAPTER - I

### INTRODUCTION

In the present work an attempt has been made to bring out different dimensions of women's education in the nineteenth century Bengal Presidency. The society of Bengal in the nineteenth century was characterized by many eventful changes in its educational, social and cultural fields. These changes had occurred in a situation of colonial subjugation and administration. The chequered history of the education of Indian women was brilliantly reflected in its nature of development amidst these changes.

A considerable number of works are done on the present subject. Thus Y.B. Mathur's Women Education in India, 1813-1966 and K.K. Dutt's, Education and Social Amelioration of Women in Pre-Mutiny India, examine in general the development of Indian Women's Education. Mathur while studying the problem extensively in an all India level, gives scant but equal attention to all the Presidencies. K.K. Dutt's is a commendable work which discusses the problem of women's education in the Pre-mutiny India. But many important events in the history of women's education occurred after the Mutiny of 1857. Jogesh Chandra Bagal presents a good work on the subject dealing exclusively with the Bengal Presidency. But

he has focussed his major attention on the role of the missionaries. Obviously he is dealing with the subject in its first phase and in this phase of the development of women's education, missionaries rightly played the crucial role.<sup>1</sup> My attempt in this paper would be to study the whole of the nineteenth century to analyze the role of the missionaries, the role of the intelligentsia and above all the role of the British administration in the promotion of women's education. Lakshmi Mishra in her book, Education of Women in India (1921-1966) gives a very brief look at the nineteenth century while studying about the development of women's education for the twentieth century. Usha Chakrabarty's, Condition of Bengali women around second half of the nineteenth century deals with the other social problems of Bengali women, while having a brief look at their status of education.

The most important task undertaken in this work is to study the growth of women's education in the nineteenth century Bengal from a multifarious directions. Nineteenth century witnessed perhaps the greatest transition in Indian history. In this process of transition, British rule had a

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1. Jogesh Chandra Bagal, Women's Education in Eastern India, the First Phase. Besides this major work, Bagal has written a number of articles which had appeared in the "Bethune School and College Centenary Volume", Asiatic Review, etc. See Bibliography, for details.

tremendous role to play. This period is exciting in the sense that new social forces emerged in the Bengal Presidency. To say that the nineteenth century women's education was a part of these newly emerging social forces is to stress the obvious. But more important than that is to establish a causal link between the two. The purpose of this work is to bring out a link between the nature of British administration, women's education and social change in the nineteenth century Bengal.

In the first chapter the role of the Christian missionaries is broadly discussed. Here special attention is focussed on the history of Christian missionary organization in India and their perception of Indian society. In an era of total non-interference by the Government and total non-cooperation from the Indian themselves, the missionaries had played a historic role in going against the Indian tradition and starting education for women. An attempt is made to show the relationship that existed between the East India Company and the missionaries. A number of difficulties like procuring female teachers, hostility from some sections in Bengali society etc. were faced by the missionaries and they are discussed in detail.

The real goal of the missionaries has been debated time and again. Some commentators argue that their primary aim was conversion or proselytization. Other stream of



commentators opine that education was not necessarily a means by which the missionaries wanted to convert Indian women to their own religion. Here it is very difficult to give a clear judgement on the subject. But considering the nature of curriculum introduced by the missionaries in the girl school and their emphasis on moral and religious education, it can be said that they had the most important goal of proselytization behind their aim of education for women. They had religious overtone in their curriculum but they had not overlooked the importance of vocational and other sorts of practical education. Various evidences prove this aspect of their curriculum and it is clear that they stressed more on religious education. Besides the nature of their goal, it is finally argued that the missionaries provided the first breakthrough in Indian female education and the credit for that entirely rests on them.

The second chapter deals with the role of the newly emerging Bengali intelligentsia in the field of women's education. Here in this context a number of problems are raised. One most important aspect, discussed in this Chapter is the influence of the Western philosophy over Indian society and its role in bringing about a change of perception and understanding of Indians about their women. It is argued, that the coming of scientific temper, liberal thinking and progressive ideas brought Bengali society to

the brink of a transition. This transitional phase, produced a set of intelligentsia who by their rational interpretation started scathing attack against Indian tradition and dynamised the women's education. From among the nineteenth century intelligentsia the name of Rammohan Roy, Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, Raja Radhakant Deb has been specially mentioned while discussing their role. A serious attempt has been made to evaluate the importance of 'Young Bengal' group who otherwise played an imaginative role in the field of women's education. It is shown in this chapter that the Bengali intelligentsia perceived the Indian society well and seriously appealed the Indians to reform their society. Many reform movements had picked up during this period. "Reform centering around the improvement of women's position and their consequences have played an important role".<sup>2</sup> The related factors examined here are (1) the abolition of child marriage and its consequences for education, (2) the compulsory nature of marriage for women, and (3) the abolition of 'suttee' and its consequence. The danger of these superstitions for women's education has been correctly observed by P. Thomas. He says that "As long as child marriage was the general rule, it was difficult to make any appreciable progress towards the spread of women's

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2. R.L. Goldstein, Indian Women in Transition: A Bangalore Case Study, p.51.

education as among the better classes of Hindus, girls were married before they were old enough to learn the three R's and the lower classes were not interested in female education."<sup>3</sup>

The fact that social reform is directly linked with the education of women was correctly understood by the nineteenth century Bengali intelligentsia. This truth led many of them to concentrate on social reform which they thought would automatically lead to education among women. Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, Keshab Chandra Sen and Radhakant Deb practically participated in promoting women's education.

Sometimes, historians ignore the importance of Raja Radhakant Deb in the context of women's education. Here it is argued that inspite of his opposition to social reform, Radhakant Deb was one of the pioneers in the movement for women's education in Bengal. Finally, it is argued that the nineteenth century intelligentsia proved to be a strong pressure group and presented the broad views of Indians before the Government. The British Government could not ignore this reality and started their official encouragement for women's education from the middle of nineteenth century.

The third chapter analyses the policy of the British India Government towards women's education. Attempt is made to find out the causes which led the Government to stop its

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3. P. Thomas, Indian Women Through Ages, p.315-16.

policy of non-interference and to start the policy of cooperation and encouragement. Also a reference is made to the Anglicist-Orientalist Controversy in the field of education. In this period of acute official controversy around the nature of education, no school of thought had given even little attention to the need of women's education. Their negative attitude was further demonstrated by the fact that, through education, they wanted only to produce a class of people who could assist them in their day-to-day administration.

An attempt has been made in this chapter to evaluate the role of Lord Dalhousie, the then Governor-General and J.E.D. Bethune, President, in the Council of Education, in the growth of women's education in Bengal. Dalhousie was the greatest champion of the cause of women, who talked of "a social revolution" by stripping Indian society "of many of its evils such as Purdah, Polygamy, and child marriage".<sup>4</sup> He took keen interest in the social affairs of India and analyzed them with utmost insight. He was the most outstanding Governor-General who wrote to Couper that "the degradation of their women has been adhered to by Hindus and Muhammadans, more tenaciously than any other customs, and the change will do more towards civilising the body of society than anything else could effect."<sup>5</sup> Dalhousie was

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4. S.C. Ghosh, Dalhousie in India, 1848-56, p.33.

5. Quoted in Ibid., p.42.

the first man to close the policy of 'non-interference' and to start the era of 'open encouragement' in the history of women's education in India. By passing several reform acts like infanticide act, caste disabilities act etc., he ushered in an age of social reforms. Approaching, "the problems of infanticide, female education and the remarriage of the Hindu widows with the spirit of a Bentham",<sup>6</sup> Dalhousie the foremost utilitarian in the Indian soil, cooperated both in his official and personal capacity to give a major boost to women's education.

Bethune was another bright star in the sky of nineteenth century women's education in Bengal. It is argued in this chapter that, Bethune by his correct assessment of the Indian society and its women, had started a prominent movement for the education of women. His communications with Dalhousie on women's education sufficiently prove his deep interest in this regard. Bethune for the first time had established a modern and secular school for girls most popularly known as "the Bethune School", which is considered as an important milestone in the history of Bengal's women's education. He proved an accelerating force for the cause. After his death he even attracted more attention for his mission as S.C. Ghosh puts it most critically, "a dead Bethune proved a stronger force than a living Bethune in getting support for his school."<sup>7</sup>

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6. Ibid., pp.133-34.

7. Ibid., p.46.

The other aspects discussed in this chapter is the importance of the Education Despatch of 1854, the Stanley's Despatch of 1859 and the Education Commission's Report of 1882, in the context of women's education. It is argued that, though Education Despatch was the first governmental document in support of women's education, it was the 1882 Education Commission headed by William Hunter, which brought out a systematic and well-planned programme for women's education. All the provisions suggested by the Commission have been analyzed in detail.

The concluding chapter summarizes the findings of all the preceding chapters and discusses the main factors responsible for the success of the movement of women's education in the nineteenth century Bengal.

The study is based on the available primary sources which include various reports, quinquennial reviews of education and the proceedings of the Bethune society and school. Besides these major primary sources, the study is also based on other contemporary sources like English works of Rammohan Roy, diary, sermons and addresses of Keshab Chandra Sen and some correspondences of Vidyasagar and Radhakant Deb with the Government. It is hoped that the work based on the above sources will be able to highlight some aspects of the subject not so widely known.

## CHAPTER - II

### MISSIONARY CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS THE GROWTH OF THE EDUCATION OF WOMEN

The first half of the nineteenth century witnessed perhaps the most fertile period of the multifaceted growth of the missionary activities in Indian society. Bengal Presidency was the main centre of these activities. All the Christian missionary groups, who operated in the Presidency of Bengal were organized and encouraged not by the Government,<sup>1</sup> but by the private Christian devotees. They were having the supreme idea that "they must carry out the divine command to go to all nations."<sup>2</sup>

There were as many as a dozen of missionary organizations operating in the Bengal Presidency in the nineteenth century. But all these organizations were not important so far as the education of women was concerned. The organizations which played key rôle in the field of education were as follows:

The "Baptist Missionary Society"<sup>3</sup> through its tireless efforts propagated the ideals of Christian religion. William Carey<sup>4</sup> was the leading activist in this organization.

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1. They were not supported either by the East India Company nor by the British Government.
  2. A Hundred Years in Bengal, A History of the Oxford Mission, 1880-1980, p.4.
  3. "Baptist Missionary Society" is used in its abbreviated form as "B.M.S." hereafter.
  4. Carey contributed a lot to the development of Indian education. He was a shoemaker, who was keenly associated with the B.M.S.

Besides Carey, B.M.S. sent out other four missionaries to Calcutta. Two of them, Brunsdon and Grant, died shortly after their arrival in India. Their contribution to women's education was not significant. The other two famous missionaries were Ward and Marshman who later on played vital role in the field of women's education.

The next prominent organization was the "London Missionary Society."<sup>5</sup> The society was formed in 1793 in London. It sent its first missionary Reverend Nathaniel Forsyth to Bengal in 1798. In 1812 Robert May (1788-1818) was sent by the L.M.S. who later on became a pioneer in the field of women's education by establishing the first women's school at Chinsura.

The "Church Missionary Society"<sup>6</sup> formed in 1783 in England was mainly directed to hold the missionary activities in all Asian and African countries. Actually the C.M.S. started its work in Calcutta only in 1807. The first batch of C.M.S. missionaries came to Calcutta in 1810. Burdwan district became the main centre of C.M.S.'s activities. In Calcutta, the C.M.S. established their main centre at Mirzapore.<sup>7</sup>

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5. "London Missionary Society" is used as "L.M.S." hereafter.

6. The "Church Missionary Society" is used as "C.M.S." hereafter.

7. William Stock, The History of the C.M.S., Vol.I, p.194.



All these Missionary Organizations had wide networks in the Bengal Presidency. They in their own way championed the cause of women's education in the nineteenth century. The individuals, associated with all the above missionary organizations possessed some special qualities, which they inherited from the nineteenth century environment of England. The mid-eighteenth century saw a great spurt in the missionary activities especially in the time, when the above organizations came up. The reason for this spurt in the missionary activity "included the Evangelical revival, the example of Moravian missionaries and the growth of British power in India which seemed to bring with it both a responsibility and opportunity."<sup>8</sup> "The men who engaged in missionary work", in nineteenth century Bengal "naturally reflected the characteristics of the more zealous sector of contemporary protestant Christianity."<sup>9</sup>

To understand the attitudes of the missionaries towards women's education, one must look closely at their relationship with the East India Company, their perception of Indian society and its women, and last but not least their ultimate goal in this direction.

The background in which the Christian missionaries worked in Bengal was singularly not favourable to them. The

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8. M.A. Laird, Missionaries and Education in Bengal (1793-1837), p.35.

9. Ibid.

East India Company maintained itself purely as a commercial concern in the initial period of the nineteenth century. For this reason, it was more concerned with its own existence. So East India Company believed that, "it should not only recognize the religions of the people, but should also support and patronize them as fully as the Indian rulers had done before them."<sup>10</sup>

Keeping these reasons in view the East India Company did not support the missionaries. It even refused to allow the missionary to settle or preach in the Indian territories, "believing that the hostile atmosphere thus surely created, could endanger the safety of the empire in the east."<sup>11</sup> In spite of the hostile attitude of the Company, the missionaries had gained some footholds in Bengal, due to some officials in Company's administration, who were personally benevolent to them.

In this unfavourable circumstances, the missionaries found Bengal a peculiar society to cope up with. A brief and comprehensive description of the prevailing social condition will speak volume for the general environment in nineteenth century Bengal. Hinduism in Bengal had adopted all the diverse elements like caste system, idolatry, ban on widow remarriage, system of suttee etc. Muslim society

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10. J.N. Farquhar, Modern Religious Movements in India, p.23.

11. Ibid., p.9.

was not devoid of all those obnoxious elements. A. Mukherjee puts the Hindu society more squarely than anybody else. He writes, "Hindu religious practice had come to consist mainly in the scrupulous observance of the rituals prescribed for the worship of the various deities, and of the rules and regulations of the caste system."<sup>12</sup> Laird observes that, "social life inextricably bound up with religion was disfigured by such practices as the burning of widows, the drowning of children in the Ganges in fulfilment of vows and polygamy by Kulin Brahman."<sup>13</sup>

The position of women in this situation was simply precarious. In the beginning of the nineteenth century, there was fairly a superstitious belief among the Bengalees that educated women would soon become widow. William Adam<sup>14</sup> points out that "a strong feeling existed amongst the people of Bengal that education was contrary to the modesty of women and that a girl taught to read and write would after marriage become a widow."<sup>15</sup>

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12. A. Mukherjee, Reform and Regeneration in Bengal (1774-1823), p.126.

13. M.A. Laird, op.cit., p.51.

14. William Adam came to Bengal as a Baptist missionary in 1817 and left in 1816. He was appointed by the British Indian Government to survey the indigenous system of education in Bengal. His report was regarded as a most authentic source to look at the existing system of education. He submitted his report in 1835, 1836 and 1838.

15. William Adam, Reports on Vernacular Education in Bengal Submitted to Government of India in 1835, 1836, 1838, ed. by A.N. Basu, p.9.

Inspite of the general hostility towards women's education, we find signs of education prevalent among some sections of Bengalee women. This education was merely meant to enable the girls to read and write. Some enlightened members provided education to their daughters even before 1818 (the date of the first regular girl schools in Bengal open to all) "to enable them perhaps to manage their properties in the event of widowhood."<sup>16</sup>

This is the background in which the missionary started their work. Their main attention was directed towards the prevalent superstitions in Bengalee society. In fact the missionaries cleverly took up the weakness of the Bengalee society as their first consideration. They made sweeping generalization about Indian society. Charles Grant observed that the majority of the Indians were "exceedingly depraved". None he observed was worse than the Bengali, who was "destitute" to a wonderful degree of those qualities which were requisite to the security and comfort of society, wanting truth, honesty and good faith, in an extreme of which European society furnishes no example. In conclusion Grant added that "abject slavery and unparalleled depravity, have become distinguishing characteristics of the Hindus."<sup>17</sup> This is no doubt a sweeping generalization about

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16. Usha Chakrabarty, Condition of Bengali Women around the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century, p.38.

17. Quoted in E. Daniel Potts, British Baptist Missionaries in India (1793-1837), (The History of Serampore and its Missions), p.6.

Indian society. India contained some obnoxious traditions but not the extent to which the missionaries have described.

The missionaries first attacked the belief of Bengali society about their women. They believed that the system of purdah kept many Bengalee Hindu and Muslim women in a state approaching imprisonment. They had also the important motive to convert Indians to Christianity. And they thought, "this process of conversion of its people to Christianity was intimately bound up with the progressive improvement of their condition."<sup>18</sup>

The East India Company being busy with the work of expanding its empire, did not mind to bother about women's education. There was a policy of total non-involvement towards it. In this condition one is curious enough to know the nature of role played by the missionaries in the field of women's education.

The missionaries had tried both in England and in India to enforce their cause most strongly. In 1812, the missionary question was freshly taken up by some missionaries to influence the Parliament during the debate on the ensuing renewal of the Company's Charter. Wilberforce played an important role in this regard. He was supported by other missionary organizations. He even went to the extent of quoting from Charles Grant's observation to describe the

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18. Ibid., p.2.

debasing nature of Indian society and to justify the missionary cause. After a long debate on the subject a clause XXXIII was added in the Charter Act of 1813 which says, "...such measures ought to be adopted as may tend to the introduction among them (Indians) of useful knowledge, and of religious and moral improvement, and in furtherance of the above object, sufficient facilities ought to be afforded by law to persons desirous of going to and remaining in India."<sup>19</sup> After the clause was introduced, missionaries came to India in a greater number. Both Hastings and Amhrest had personal regard for the missionaries.<sup>20</sup> After the restriction on the activity of the missionary was lifted there followed a period of intense work in the field of women's education. A new chapter was opened in the Indian history. A new tradition which was most purposefully followed, belonged to the credit of the missionaries.

In a period of four decades, the missionaries dynamised the women's education. "The void created by the letter indifference of the state was partially filled by the missionaries who played the role of pioneers in this field."<sup>21</sup> They opened a variety of schools including Boarding and Day schools

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19. Quoted in K.P. Sengupta, The Christian Missionaries in Bengal (1793-1833), p.55.

20. Ibid., p.56.

21. Y.B. Mathur, Women's Education in India, p.21.

and also introduced Zenana<sup>22</sup> education.

As it is pointed out earlier, the Bengalee tradition did not see the women's education with favour. There was a strong masculine prejudice against it. In addition to this, there were certain traditions which went against them. One of the most important traditions was that, "they often were married at the age of eight, and once in their husbands' houses it was not considered proper for them to go about freely outside."<sup>23</sup> For this reason, the missionaries were considered the pioneers in the field of women's education.

The aim of the missionaries was both a mixture of humanitarian and evangelistic. They were really shocked at the sad plight of Indian women. It is naturally expected from the people, who held the women in their own society in high esteem.<sup>24</sup> Education according to the missionaries was a legitimate weapon in ameliorating the condition of Indian women.

First the Christian missionaries opened schools only

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22. Zenana education was a type of domestic instruction given to girls by the Christian Governess. The girls who received this education belonged to the middle and higher class in Bengali society.

23. K.M. Banerjea, A Prize Essay in Native Female Education, p.20.

24. In nineteenth century women were much progressed in Britain. There was no such tradition against women's education in the nineteenth century Britain. S.S. Vedatirtha in his book, Development of Female Education in England and Utilisation of Western Methods of Education in Bengal, has given a vivid description of the education of women in Britain.

for the Christian converts. But later on when a lot of success came to them, they opened school for non-Christians also. Indians were suspicious as they believed that their children by coming in contact with Christianity, will face the danger of conversion. So only the bolder type of Indians who were prepared to face social ostracism sent their children to these schools.<sup>25</sup>

In the last part of eighteenth century the "Free School Society"<sup>26</sup> took the most important attempt in the field of women's education. The Governor of this society notified in 1789 that "they are ready to receive application for the admission of children whether male or female to be educated in the schools established by the Charity, which the beneficence of the public has now founded, the males being between the ages of five and fourteen as the plan sets forth."<sup>27</sup> Some twenty nine children were admitted after the notice was given, out of which twelve were girls. By 1793, the number of girls was raised to nineteen. In 1799 another girl school was proposed by Mrs. Middleton, which was to be set up in Dinapore. All these schools were most probably meant for the children of Europeans residing in India.

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25. P. Thomas, Indian Women Through the Ages, p.311.

26. An Association of Missionaries formed in Calcutta on 21 December 1789.

27. Quoted in K.K. Datta, Education and Social Amelioration of Women in Pre-mutiny India, p.9.



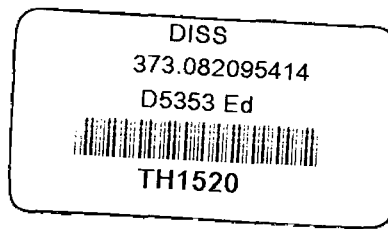
The first school for Indian girls was opened at Chinsura in the nineteenth century. Mr. Robert May, a pioneering Christian missionary was the founder of this school. But the school did not produce much success. The institution was discountenanced by the Company's Government. But Robert May of the L.M.S. has been credited with being "the pioneer of lower female education in India because of a school, he established at Chinsura in 1818."<sup>28</sup>

The Baptist Missionaries were the first batch of missionaries, who made concerted efforts to start schools for females in Calcutta. This noble idea behind the cause of women's education led them to form the famous "Calcutta Juvenile Society". The Society was founded in 1819, and Reverend W.H. Pearce of the Baptist Mission, became its first President. The main aim of the 'Female Juvenile Society' was to provide free schools for the girls of Calcutta and its suburbs. The rules<sup>29</sup> of the society were the clear indicator of the genuine wish of the society to promote female education. One such rule was that "a society be formed for the promotion of female education in Bengal, and that it to be denominated, 'the Calcutta Female Juvenile

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28. Ibid., p.9.

29. There were as many as five rules framed by the society. One among them is described above. Other rules are mostly about organisational matters. They can be found in the book of J.S. Bagal, "Women's Education in Eastern India - The First Phase", p.8.



Society' for the establishment and support of Bengalee Female Schools."<sup>30</sup> The Female Juvenile Society had to change its name to "The Female Department of the Bengal Christian School Society". In 1832, the society again changed its name to "Calcutta Baptist Female Society for the establishment and support of native female schools."<sup>31</sup>

The Female Juvenile Society set up several schools under its supervision and the first school under the Society was set up at Gouri Bera. At the end of the first year of its emergence there were eighty students under it. Reverend Mr. Keith in the annual meeting of the school held on 2 May 1821, "made some remarks on the importance, that he had the gratification to know that some natives were to be found of the highest respectability, who were giving their attention to the subject, and in some instances privately endeavouring in their circles to give effect to these designs for the instruction of their females."<sup>32</sup> The Society proceeded to establish women schools in Shambazar, Jaunbazar, Intalli etc. There was "one school in Calcutta containing from sixty to seventy scholars, another at Chitpore containing 110 to 120, and a third at Sibpore in which twenty children of native converts are instructed."<sup>33</sup>

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30. Ibid.

31. William Adam, op.cit., p.46.

32. A Biographical sketch of David Hare by Peary Chand Mitra referred to J.A. Richey, in Selections from Educational Records, Part II, p.35.

33. William Adam, op.cit., p.46.



The schools were superintended by a committee of ladies. A Report of the Female Juvenile Society which was published on December 14, 1821 and had appeared in the Calcutta Journal on March 11, 1822 gives some sober account of the ups and downs of the society. The Report observed that, "the society has been in operations upwards of two years and a half; when first established, the obstacles to its usefulness seemed insurmountable, only one Bengalee girl being found after a diligent search of several months, qualified to instruct her country women, and she for the illness of her husband was obliged a few months after to relinquish the task; the Committee also made a trial of introducing some girls into the boy's school but with very little success; so that for nearly the first twelve months after the establishment of the society only eight pupils were receiving instruction at its expense. In April 1820, a well qualified mistress was obtained, and thirteen scholars collected and by the preserving exertions and the cooperation of friends it was gradually brought to its present state...."<sup>34</sup>

The Report also pointed out the difficulty in procuring teachers.

"The number of pupils now receiving instruction at the society's expense has increased since last Anniversary from 26 to 79; besides which there are several under school

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34. Quoted in J.S. Bagal, op.cit., p.9.

masters, who pay for their own instruction. Seventy six of the society's scholars are under the care of female teachers and three only, two in Shambazar and one in Jaunbazar are under school master. Each of the schools is placed under particular care of a member of the Committee and is visited by her, if possible, once or twice every week...."<sup>35</sup>

From the above account it becomes quite clear that the society had faced a number of difficulties. But in the gradual process of time, effort was taken to overcome them. The smooth process in which the society was overcoming various difficulties, speaks volume for its ability.

The history of the Female Juvenile Society did not stop there. It attracted support from the respectable Indians. Raja Radhakant Deb was the leading figure of all Indians, who was all out to help the society. He as the Secretary to the Calcutta School Society invited the girls of the schools of the Female Juvenile Society to appear at the periodical examinations of the scholars of his own society held at his own house in Sobhabazar in 1821 and 1822. Radhakant Deb was greatly pleased at the proficiency of the girls in reading and spelling.

During this time, Raja Rammohan Roy came out with his attack on suttee and vigorously supported the need for women's education. This gave tremendous impetus to the

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35. Ibid., p.10.

women's education. Another Indian Gourmohan Vidyalkar came out with his book Stri Siksha Vidyayaka in collaboration with Radhakant Deb. This book contained evidence in favour of the education of women from the examples of illustrious women of ancient and medieval ages.

Radhakant Deb gave the manuscript of the book to Female Juvenile Society. It published the book in March 1822. The first edition of this book was small in size but later on when the Calcutta School Society published the second edition, it became large in size. The book provided a lot of scope for the necessary curriculum for the young girls in the schools. These events and support from the Indians strengthened the cause of women's education, newly pursued by the Female Juvenile Society.

By 1823 the number of the girls schools rose to as many as eight. One most important factor to note here is that most of the girls in these schools were from the lower strata of the Indian society.

The Female Juvenile Society during this time was incorporated into the Bengal Christian Society and became its Female Department. From now onwards it tried not to seek help from the Calcutta Book Society and for that matter from Radhakant Deb. The reason for the withdrawal can be seen in the following ways.

The curriculum in all the schools under Female Juvenile Society included religious instruction. This led the

organizers of the school to keep this thing aloof from the Hindus, like Radhakant Deb etc. as far as possible. It is to be noted that, besides Christian education, the girls were also taught in practical education like learning needle work, sewing etc. But this sort of practical education was strictly a secondary part to which no importance was attached.

The Society by this time had extended its range of activities to the suburban areas. The Report on the functioning of the society came out in the Government Gazette<sup>36</sup> of 26 January 1826. From this Report one finds definite information about the school curriculum. Besides other types of instructions like sewing and needlework, what the Gazette informed is that, religious education was a most vital part of their curriculum.

Starting from a humble origin the Female Juvenile Society continued most vigorously with its works for a number of years. It is most surprising to note that the Society had established its schools in far off places like Cutwa and Birbhum. "There were at one time several schools for native girls in Birbhum, but they have all been formed into one central school which is in connection with Calcutta Baptist Female School Society."<sup>37</sup> At Cutwa under

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36. Quoted in J.S. Bagal, op.cit., p.15.

37. William Adam, op.cit., p.24.

the Female Juvenile Society, "there was a girl school with about thirty scholars, who after learning the alphabet etc. are instructed to write and to commit to memory different catechisms and portions of scriptures and read the gospels etc."<sup>38</sup>

The Calcutta Christian observers in its December issue of 1832, published the eleventh report of the Female Juvenile Society. The achievement of the society can be gauged well from an excerpt produced below:

"...The Calcutta Baptist Female School Society had the honour of leading the way in Native Female Education in Bengal, and it gives us pleasure to find from its eleventh annual report, lately published, that it is still prosecuting these interesting exertions with activity and success."<sup>39</sup>

Going to give a statistical account of the achievement of the Society, the Report observed that there were "seven schools in Calcutta or its neighbourhood, under the superintendence of Mrs. S.H. Pearce, Mrs. Yates, Mrs. Punny and Mrs. Thomas, containing altogether 150 children: a Central School at Chitpore, superintended by Mrs. G. Pearce, containing 120 children, a second Central School at Cutwa under the care of Mrs. W. Carey, containing nearly 200 children and four schools in Birhboom containing 60 children

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38. Ibid., p.20.

39. Quoted in J.S. Bagal, op.cit., p.17.

and superintended by Mrs. Williamson. The total number of children connected with the institution is about 500."<sup>40</sup>

The above lines are the mouth piece of the achievement of the Female Juvenile Society. The Society can be held as the torch bearer of Indian women's education. Its unflinching activities in the cause of women's education has been an example for other societies to follow.

The Ladies Society came in succession to provide a suitable direction to women's education in India. The Society was named as "the Ladies Society for Native Female Education in Calcutta and its Vicinity". It was founded on 25 March 1824, under the auspices of the Church Missionary Society. Miss Mary Cooke (who later became Mrs. Isaac Wilson because of her marriage with Rev. Isaac Wilson)<sup>41</sup> occupies a prominent position in the history of the Ladies Society. During this time, there was an acute inadequacy in getting women teachers. So in 1821, "the British and Foreign School Society in consultation with the Calcutta School Society's agent Mr. Harrington and with Mr. Ward of the Serampore Mission, both of them in England, opened a subscription for the out-fit of a mistress to be sent to India qualified to instruct females born or bred in this country in the

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40. Quoted in Ibid.

41. Reverend Isaac Wilson was a missionary who came to India in connection with the Church Missionary Society.



Lancasterian method of mutual instruction, that they might afterwards diffuse the system throughout the country as opportunity offered."<sup>42</sup> Miss Cooke was especially deputed for this purpose. Starting from England in May 1821 she reached India in November of the same year.<sup>43</sup>

She was primarily sent "with the laudable object of helping the Calcutta School Society in the work of female education by opening girls schools."<sup>44</sup> But due to some unavoidable circumstances the Calcutta School Society could not utilise the service of Miss Cooke. So Miss Cooke had to begin her activities under the Church Missionary Society.

Miss Cooke was a lady with a difference. She did not start her work abruptly, but with a careful adjustment with the Bengali Society. The first step in this direction was that of Miss Cooke's attempt to learn the Bengali dialect. Also by coming largely in contact with the Bengali women she could muster enough of their thinking and ideas. Then only Miss Cooke started her first girls' school.

The first school started by her was situated at Thanthani with twelve children, the number of whom increased up to twenty five. Another school was started at Mirzapore with fifteen girls. In Sobhabazar a girl school was started

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42. William Adam, op.cit., p.47.

43. Priscilla Chapman, Hindoo Female Education, p.75.

44. J.S. Bagal, op.cit., p.19.

by Miss Cooke with seventeen girls on 25 March 1822. A prominent pundit, under the influence of Miss Cooke founded a school at Krishnabazar with forty five girls on 2 April 1822. At Shyambazar, a noble Musalman assembled eighteen girls and started a school. Other schools were started at Mullick Bazar and Kumartolly. By April 1822 the number of pupils under Miss Cooke rose up to two hundred and schools to that of eight. Chapman writes that "the number of girls on the school list was two hundred and seventeen about two hundred in daily attendance."<sup>45</sup>

The initial venture of Miss Cooke was encouraged by the wife of Governor General Hastings. Priscilla Chapman says that "the merchioness of Hastings afforded great encouragement to the establishment of these schools; she not only patronized the commencement, but gave work to be done by the children and a few days before her departure visited in person most of the schools, inspected the classes commending those who had made the greatest proficiency and encouraged them by rewards."<sup>46</sup> The local people of Calcutta and its suburban areas also helped Miss Cooke in this regard. The Hindus headed by Raja Radhakant Deb, Raja Baidyanath Ray, Raja Shib Krishna and others extended their patronage in some way or the other. In spite of their

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45. Priscilla Chapman, op.cit., p.81.

46. Quoted in J.A. Richey, op.cit., p.37.

orthodoxy, they were all out to help Miss Cooke in her mission. She was put in such a favourable circumstances that under her, the girls schools increased to twenty four and the number of schools four hundred.

The most vulnerable part of Miss Cooke's schools was its curriculum. On the nature of the curriculum, rested the support of the Indians. Curriculum was the core part in the programme of the missionaries. There are evidences to prove that the girls in Miss Cooke's school was given some practical education like needle work and sewing. It also included reading and writing. "In six schools where some proficiency had already been made, about eighty dozen of dusters were sewn, and some of the scholars became capable of finer work."<sup>47</sup> In some schools knitting was also introduced. But the major part of education was related to Christian religion. This emphasis on religious education was not favoured by the Indians.

The annual examination, which was held under the Church Missionary Society on 23 June 1823 in which one hundred and ten set for the examination, speaks a lot about the merit of the girl students. "The first class read with ease a Bengali Tract on female education (Stri Sikhsha Vidhayaka by Pandit Gour Mohan Vidyalankar), the work of a learned native, though considered a rather difficult book from the frequent occurances of sanskrit phrases; others

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47. J.S. Bagal, op.cit., p.21.

read in books of fables; Watts Catechism translated into Bengali. Their proficiency in needlework was also respectable. This species of employment, which the girls at first considered as degrading, has, it is said, become an object of anxious solicitation with them."<sup>48</sup> At the close of the examinations, rewards were distributed among the students supplied by the Marchioness of Hastings on her departure from India.

The hard work of superintendence and teaching for all the schools overburdened Miss Cooke. Keeping this thing in view the Church Missionary Society wanted to shift the management of the schools to a Society formed in March of that year under the designation of the "Ladies Society for Native Female Education". The central objective of the society was "that the education of native females is an object highly desirable, and worthy the best exertions of all who wish well to the happiness and prosperity of India."<sup>49</sup>

Lady Amhrest, the wife of the Governor-General Lord Amhrest consented to be the patroness of the society. There were thirteen European ladies in the Committee including the Secretary, Mrs. Ellerton and Superintendent, Mrs. Wilson. There were many subscribers to the society. David Hare was a subscriber to it and he, "encouraged native female

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48. Quoted in Ibid., p.21.

49. Quoted in Ibid., p.23.

education by his presence at the periodical examinations which were held"<sup>50</sup> from time to time.

The new society started its work with twenty four girl schools and four hundred scholars. By 1824 this number had increased to fifty and eight hundred respectively. Of course, some schools under the Female Juvenile Society were included into it. A table, reproduced below, will show the number of girls examined and the speed in which women's education was moving.

Table

Year	Girls Schools	No. of girls	Those examined
1822	8	200	-
1823	15	300	110
1824	24	400	100
1825	30	500	-
1826	-	540	200
1827	-	600	170

Source: J.S. Bagal, Women's Education in Eastern India, p.26.

The increasing trend in number suggests that the Bengali Society had evinced keen interest in girls education. The higher echelon of Hindu society, by this time had come

50. Biographical sketch of David Hare by Peary Chand Mitra, quoted in J.A. Richey, op.cit., p.36.

out frankly to the open and started sending their girls to the school. The two annual examinations held in 1824 and 1825 indicate the increasing interest in the women's education by Indians. They showed their practical sympathy and presented themselves on those occasions physically. Writing on one examination, which was held in 1824, Priscilla Chapman observes, "the first class read the New Treatment not only with facility but with evident comprehensions of its meaning; specimens of their needle work and writing were in exhibitions that could have been entertained when the work was first commenced. After the examination suitable rewards were distributed and a variety of contributions were disposed of amongst the visitors, the proceeds being set apart for the erection of a central school."<sup>51</sup>

The Missionary Intelligence for December 1824 dealt with another aspect of the examination. It observed, "... there are however, some among the better classes of Natives, who expressly wish the mind of their females to be improved. It was therefore not the least gratifying circumstance of the day of the examination, to witness the attendance of several Native Gentlemen of rank and consequence, giving thereby countenance to the education of

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51. Priscilla Chapman, op.cit., p.56.

Native Females, and expressing their full approbation of the measures adopted for their instruction. Among those were Maha Rajah Seebkrishno Bahadur (Maha Raja Seebkrishna Bahadur) - Baboo Krishensuckah Ghosh - Baboo Nilmonnee Dass - Cassicanth Ghosal (Kasikant Ghosal) etc."<sup>52</sup>

Now it was high time to establish a Central Female School for a better coordination among all female schools. For the establishment of such an institution financial helps were adequately available. The most prominent donations were from Raja Baidyanath Roy and Lady Amhrest which amounted to twenty thousand rupees. Donations were collected from other sources also. With a lot of fund at hand, a locality was selected on the eastern corner of the Cornwallis Square. The foundation stone of the Central Female School was laid by Lady Amhrest on 18 May 1826. The school's formal construction was completed in 1827. Now the strength of the school of the society was raised up to six hundred. Even before the construction of the Central Female School was complete, Mrs. Wilson, Superintendent of the Society's schools, was collecting girls in a house nearby, "in order to give them lesson together, thus saving much labour and unnecessary troubles."<sup>53</sup> Mrs. and Mr. Wilson ultimately took possession of the Central School with fifty eight girls.<sup>54</sup>

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52. Quoted in J.S. Bagal, op.cit., p.28.

53. Samachar Darpan, July 28, 1827, Sambadpatra Sekaler Katha, Vol.I, Third Edition, quoted in J.S. Bagal, op.cit., p.33.

54. Priscilla Chapman, op.cit., p.89.

The first public examinations of the pupils of the Central School was held on 17 December 1828. One hundred scholars set for the examinations. Girls of all ages showed wonderful progress in their study. But the most disheartening factor with the reorganized female school was its strong emphasis on Christian learning. This time, it became clearly manifested that, the main endeavour of the missionaries was to teach Christian learning.

When the overemphasis on religious teaching was clearly manifested, the respectable Indians withdrew their help as they had done with the Female Juvenile Society. Prasanna Kumar Tagore, the Editor of the Reformer in its 19 December 1831, brought out these major drawbacks of the missionary schools. 'The Reformer' wanted the missionaries to reform the system of curriculum. But unfortunately no attention was paid to this warning. The system went on as it was.

Meanwhile, a separate branch was opened with the 'Central Female School' and it was named as the 'Orphan Class'. During the flood in 1833 and 1834, Mrs. Wilson came to collect hundreds of destitutes. They were given shelter in the central female schools premises. Later on they got admitted to the orphan class. But Mrs. Wilson always had the intention to start a new school for the destitutes. "It was mainly through her efforts that a home for them was built at Agarpara, a few miles off Calcutta,"<sup>55</sup> which was named as

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55. J.S. Bagal, op.cit., p.41.



"Female Orphan Refuge". Mrs. Wilson worked there until 1840.

Another class was opened in the Central Female School to train older pupils for teaching purposes. It formed the nucleus of the future Normal Schools,<sup>56</sup> for both male and female in India. A full-fledged normal school was established in 1857 in the premises of the Central Female School on this basis.

The Central Female School had some important drawbacks. It undoubtedly eased the management. But the drawback was that not all the girls who had attended the local schools were able to come to the Central School. This made the system confusing.

Mrs. Wilson left India for Britain in the middle of 1845. She had created a new chapter in Indian history. She would be affectionately and gratefully remembered by the Indians for all time, for her great contribution towards female education.

The Ladies Association was another forum which did some pioneering work in the field of women's education. Mr. and Mrs. Wilson had taken strong initiative in the formation of this Association. The most important objective of this forum was to extend necessary help for the establishment of Central Female School and to help extending the

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56. Normal School was basically meant to give training to girl students to enable them to teach.

female education in Calcutta and its vicinity. Mrs. Wilson was elected the President of the Association with a Committee to superintend the work of it.

In order to avoid confusion with the schools under the Ladies Society, the Association started schools in those areas where there were no girl schools. The account given by the Government Gazettee, February 20, 1826 says that "the Association was able to open six schools, distant from those founded by the Ladies Society."<sup>57</sup> The schools were chiefly superintended by the ladies of the Association.

Gradually schools under the supervision of Ladies Association increased to twelve. But the inadequacy of fund led them to close down two of them. These schools were more or less having muslim girls as they were situated in Ontally and Jaunbazar where Muslim population was quite thick. In the subsequent years, some more schools were closed and only two prominent schools were maintained; one at Beniatola with forty girls and other at Champatala with twenty five girls. By 1833, the Ladies Association maintained only one school at the circular road.

The schools under the Ladies Association was predominant with Biblical teaching. The following excerpt will sufficiently indicate it. "The fourth class repeated Watt's Catechism which contains an epitome of the

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57. J.S. Bagal, op.cit., p.49.

Christian religion. The third class read 'Abridged Biblical History', and answered questions put to them on the history of mankind from the creation to the time of Moses, and other questions on the Gospel History, the way of recovery from the fall etc. The second class read the 10th Chapter of St. John and explained and answered questions on the whole Gospel History. The first class read the last chapter of St. Mark, and answered with readiness and propriety not only questions, which arose out of the lesson, but many promiscuous ones on the Scripture History and on Christian Doctrines."<sup>58</sup>

The Calcutta Ladies Association was discontinued in 1834. With its major emphasis on Christian religion, it could not attract much help from the Indians.

The Serampore Mission will go down in the history of the nineteenth century India as the leading light in the field of education. The persons who were members of this coveted missions were great men like William Carey, Joshua Marshman and Ward. They had started many schools and their glorious achievement lay in the formation of the famous Serampore college, which was founded in 1818.

The educational activities of the Serampore Trio was confined to the boys school and to the daughters of the Christian converts. But later on after the arrival of Ward

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58. The Calcutta Christian Observer, quoted in J.S. Bagal, op.cit., p.51.

with Miss Cooke in 1821, the Trio turned their attention towards women's education. J.C. Marshman wrote the following about their interest in the female school.

"He (Ward) and his colleagues had always acted on the principle that a native christian mother must, at the least, be qualified to teach her children to read the Bible, and that female ignorance and Christianity could not exist together."<sup>59</sup>

Ward was a great champion of women's education. He had first taken the wind to his side by setting up a number of schools around Serampore. But his untimely death on 7th March 1823 could not lead him to any further extent beyond that. But his successors Marshman and Carey carried forward the cause of women's education with great endurance. The Serampore Missionaries were greatly helped by the upper class Indians. The success was such that, by April 1824, two hundred and thirty girls belonging to thirteen girls schools assembled for the annual examination. In the following year the number of students had increased. Joshua Marshman wrote that, "in the course of the present year (1825) more than three hundred children were assembled in the college hall and passed satisfactorily all the examinations."<sup>60</sup> The educational activities of Serampore Mission

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59. Joshua Marshman, The Life and Times of Carey, Marshman and Ward etc., Vol.II, p.303.

60. Ibid.

was extended upto Aracan and Allahabad where girls schools were opened under their supervision.

In January 1828, Serampore possessed twelve schools, six in Beerbhoom, five in Dacca and three in Chittagong.<sup>61</sup> Of all the schools founded, one <sup>at</sup> Serampore was most flourishing with a sound attendance of eighty four. At Dacca, there were seven schools with two hundred and nine scholars, at Chittagong with a hundred and twenty one and one at each of the other stations, making an aggregate of four hundred and eighty four."<sup>62</sup>

The Serampore Mission with its avowed objective promoted Indian women's education with great interest but unfortunately could not avoid the basic weakness of giving exclusive teaching on Christian religion. This nature of the Christian mission had kept the Indian support at a bay. The Serampore missions were in favour of giving lessons in mother tongue.

An assessment of the achievement of the missionaries is a most important task. It is highly relevant to go into different factors which made the work of the missionaries more difficult or for that matter more easy.

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61. J.S. Bagal, "History of the Bethune School and College", in The Bethune School and College Centenary Volume, p.7.

62. Joshua Marshman, op.cit., p.450.

Missionaries got enormous help from prominent Indians including Radhakant Deb, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Gour Mohun Vidyalankar, Keshab Chandra Sen. In fact, Gour Mohun Vidyalankar's book (Stri Sikhasha Vidhayak; about female education) was very important in which he argued that in past the Hindus formerly imparted education to their girls and also mentioned some females who were reputed to be learned at the time of his writing in India. He tried to dispel the dogmatic belief from the mind of Indian people. The missionaries made a great use of this book. In spite of this, they faced insurmountable obstacles in their way.

One of the serious difficulty of the missionaries came from the custom of early marriage, prevalent among the Indians. This custom of early marriage made the period of study of the young girls very shorter than that of boys. Because the Hindus withdrew their daughters from schools when they thought that she was of marriageable age. K.M. Banerjea writes, "they were married at the age of eight and once in their husbands houses it was not considered proper for them to go about freely outside."<sup>63</sup> This early withdrawal left very little impact on the character of the young girls. In fact Campbel echoed a frequent missionary complain when he wrote that, "they were not allowed

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63. K.M. Banerjea, op.cit., p.28.

to remain in school for sufficiently long to allow their characters to be formed by their education; they left very young to marry or to take up work which paid them a little more than missionaries would for attending school."<sup>64</sup>

The attendance of the girls was very irregular in every school. This was due to the frequent occurrence of festivals both private and religious in Hindu family. This made the missionaries more perplexed. In order to increase the attendance they undertook a number of measures. The Baptist Missionary Society in Calcutta regulated the amount of wages of their peons on the number of children which they bring. In order to increase the attendance the girls were paid and given prizes on ceremonial occasions.

One discouraging factor to note is that the girls who attended the schools in the 30's and 40's of the nineteenth century were mainly drawn from the lower strata of the Society. The girls from the higher caste was disallowed due to two factors. The upper caste Indians were hesitant to leave their daughters to a school where they would be taught mainly Christianity and would sit with the daughters of the lower caste people. Secondly, the higher caste girls were not allowed to travel openly outside their locality. The Serampore Missionaries reported in 1831 that, the chief cause of reduction in attendance has been the refusal of

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64. Quoted in M.A. Laird, op.cit., p.138.

the people to allow their daughters to come to such a long distance to school. The third reason is that the Indians were not willing to leave their women folk to a school where they would be taught by male teachers.

Of course, we find some instances, where upper caste girls also attended the missionary schools. "In spite of the upper caste prejudice against going out to school, the girls were of all castes in the school of Calcutta Baptists in 1821; there were a few Brahmins and Kayasthas as well as other of middle and low castes."<sup>65</sup> And under Miss Cooke's supervision, the schools were also attended by the upper caste as the Ladies Society report pointed out that, "respectable caste and station in society have both sent their daughters and in some instances, have themselves expressed anxiety to obtain instruction."<sup>66</sup>

We get some rare instances from here and there, where higher caste girls attended the female school. But by 1830 it was becoming increasingly evident that almost majority girls were from lower caste. The Ladies Missionary Society wrote that their day schools in Calcutta were mainly attended by the daughters of cobblers and sweepers. These girls only attended in expectation of money and prizes. As a matter of

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65. Quoted in M.A. Laird, op.cit., p.132.

66. Formation of a Ladies Society for Native Female Education in Calcutta and its vicinity, 25th C.M.S. Report (1824-25), quoted in M.A. Laird, op.cit., p.137.



fact these schools practically became schools for poor girls only who in most cases joined in expectations of prizes or monetary help from the missionaries."<sup>67</sup> This higher caste prejudice went on up to 1822, "not until the 1880 did the education of higher caste girls and women was to be regarded as novelty."<sup>68</sup>

The general illiteracy of the masses contributed to the lack of interest in the female education. K.K. Datta writes that, "illiteracy of women is still a major problem."<sup>69</sup> In this adverse condition the missionaries were considered as the pioneer of women's education in Bengal.

The most difficult situation faced by the missionaries, was to procure the female teachers. Lack of female teachers led Indians to not to send their daughters. To overcome this difficulty the missionaries had to pay extra allowances to <sup>male</sup> the/teachers. When Miss Cooke and the wives of European Missions started establishing girls schools, they found it extremely difficult to get girl (monitors) in sufficient number. Daniel Potts specifically mentions this when he says that, "recruiting suitable teachers for either boys or girls

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67. Usha Chakraborty, Condition of Bengali Women around the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century, p.45.

68. E. Daniel Potts, op.cit., p.25.

69. K.K. Datta, Survey of India's Social Life and Economic Condition in the Eighteenth Century (1707-1813), p.15.

missionary schools proved perennial difficulty."<sup>70</sup> In fact, to do away with these difficulties the missionary wanted to open some central girl schools, instead of opening school in all areas. The supervision and superintendence were also to be made easy by this process. In order to reduce dependence on the female teachers and for better supervision and superintendence the local schools were converted to the Central School. But this centralisation led to the decrease in the attendance of girls as they were disallowed by their parents to travel such a long distance from their original home.

Missionaries tried to introduce female education through three main agencies. They were (a) girls' Day schools, (b) orphans Boarding schools, (c) domestic teaching arranged in the families of the middle and higher class.

The missionaries by 1830 were gradually becoming disillusioned with the girls Day schools because of the less number of attendance. They were simultaneously turning their attention towards the Boarding schools. The Orphan homes had been "established all over the country in connexion with the various missionary bodies" and were generally "superintended by the wives of the missionaries."<sup>71</sup> According to Christian Missionaries, orphan girls could be

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70. E. Daniel Potts, op.cit., p.120.

71. Calcutta Review 1855, quoted in K.K. Datta, op.cit., p.21.

brought up in a Christian environment without contamination by non-Christian influence to which the day girls were exposed when they were not actually in their schools. In orphan schools which were specifically under Mrs. Wilson, the girls were increasing in highest numbers. Mrs. Wilson wanted to concentrate all her energies on the Boarding orphan school. In fact, in 1830, having decided to concentrate all her energies on female orphanage schools, she shifted to a place called Agarpara near Hooghly.

In Burdwan district, the Day schools for girls were closed and more Boarding schools were opened. Ladies Missionary Societies in Calcutta did away with all the Day schools in 1835 and maintained only a Boarding school for christian and orphan girls, but they continued a girls day school at both Chinsura and Berhampore. The situation in Bengal was much in favour of the Boarding schools as the following statistics indicated it:

Table  
Girls Institution and Enrolment 1851

	Bombay	Bengal	NWP	Punjab	Central Province	Madras	Total
Day Schools for girls	31	26	8	-	3	217	285
Pupils in the Day school for girls	1186	690	213	-	62	6768	8919
Boarding school for girls	8	27	9	2	1	39	86
Pupils in Boarding school for girls	139	797	173	35	20	110	2274

Source: Lakshmi Mishra, Education of Women in India (1921-1966).

The table indicates that Bengal Presidency had more Boarding Schools than Day schools by 1851. In contrast, the Presidencies of Bombay and Madras had more number of Day schools than Boarding schools.

The missionaries tried to introduce domestic education through governess in the families of the Indians.<sup>72</sup>

Mrs. Wilson and Rev. Krishna Mohan Banerjea were questioned in 1840 about the "necessity and possibilities" of a scheme of domestic instruction and they gave rather favourable

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72. K.K. Datta, op.cit., p.22.

answers which were published in the Calcutta Christian Observer of March 1840 and in the Calcutta Review of 1855.

With all these difficulties the Missionaries had committed the crucial mistake of putting more emphasis on the Christian Education. Laird perceived this truth well, when he remarked that, "the old prejudice was being undermined but by their insistence on religious teaching the missionaries were wasting a good opportunity to spread girls education and indeed had raised a new barrier against it."<sup>73</sup>

The missionaries did not believe in education for girls for its own sake. They more believed in giving religious instruction. By not over emphasizing on the religious instruction, they would have created a formidable chapter in the history of the Indian women's education. After four decades of intense activities, the missionaries could not multiply the schools in rapid momentum. Whatever the truth may be the missionaries for the first time exploded the tradition against Indian women and heralded a golden age for women's education.

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73. M.A. Laird, op.cit., p.137.

## CHAPTER - III

### THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE INTELLI- GENTSIA IN INDIA TOWARDS THE PROMOTION OF EDUCATION OF WOMEN

Accompanied by the relentless activities of missionaries in the field of women's education, nineteenth century Bengal underwent unprecedented convulsion in its social and intellectual ethos. Women's education got a new lease of life by this historical phenomena which swept the Bengali society like a cyclonic wave originating from the West. The contact of the Oriental Civilisation with the Occidental became a fruitful incident adding new chapters in its history. A new class emerged in the intellectual horizon of Bengal, the class getting enthralled in the fresh fragrance of modern ideas, bounced upward to ring a death-knell of the dogmatic behaviour of the Bengali Culture. A new sun with its delicately woven rays overpowered the mental faculty of the Bengali people. Calcutta, the main centre of Bengal, got up from its slumber to catch up with the march of the modern civilization. The newly produced Bengali intelligentsia with their dynamic interpretation of the contemporary problems contributed marvellously towards the cause of women's education.

The term 'intelligentsia' has been subject to mis-understanding in the context of its definition. And a brief

clarification is needed before we enter into the broad field of our subject. 'Intelligentsia' is a class of people who act as mediator between two civilizations. It is a class which tries to solve the problems of its society by adopting itself to the new features of an alien modern civilization. The modern intelligentsia of Bengal emerged from a society which was forcibly annexed by the British.

Bengal was the treasure house of British exploitative machinery. This flourishing Indian territory shouldered major burden of an expanding British nation. The large scale participation in the socio-economic-cultural life of Bengal caused major commotion in its social life. It came in contact with hundreds of British agents, governor generals, royal officers, judges of supreme court and high court, physicians and engineers. They came to India with a rich heritage of renaissance, centuries of scientific achievement and rational thinking. These ideas infused a new dynamism into the Bengali society and contributed towards the emergence of a set of intelligentsia.

The English education was the potent force in forcing the wheel of the Bengali society towards giving birth to a new tradition. By his newly acquired ideas the new intelligentsia could interpret the society, its religion and above all its superstition around the women. David Kopf says that, "before Bentinck arrived on the scene...Calcutta boasted a

native intelligentsia conversant with events in Europe aware of its own historical heritage and progressively alert about its own future in the modern world."<sup>1</sup>

The newly emerged intelligentsia of the nineteenth century were optimistic enough to overcome the drawbacks of their society. The special character of their revolt lay in its secular motive and a scientific critique of the religion and society. The main feature of their revolt was to lead a movement for social reform. It grew up in all parts of India; almost simultaneously it gained the support of the political authority of the state which resulted in legislation and administrative action, and it succeeded in producing general Indian acceptance of the social ideals of the rebels - ideas which are in ascendancy today."<sup>2</sup>

Here one may wonder at the relevance of giving the detail of the above features in the context of women's education. The relevance can be seen in the following ways. Women are not a distinct part separated from the society. On the other hand, they are a part and parcel of it. And they are the maximum victim of the target of the dogmas of a society and especially the Bengali society. Ban on widow

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1. David Kopf, The British Orientalism and Bengal Renaissance, p.4.

2. Charles Heimsath, Indian Nationalism and Hindu Social Reform, p.9.



remarriage, system of "suttee", polygamy and restriction on their education are some of the major stigmas from which the women of Bengal have suffered. So an attempt to reform the society is directly an attempt to promote the position of women and to encourage women's education.

As it is already told in the first chapter, the first breakthrough in women's education came through the missionaries. But the "aims of the missionaries were naturally directed towards using education, not as an end in itself, but as a means to evangelization."<sup>3</sup> But the desire to educate the women was upperhand in their minds. They were constantly supported by Rammohan Roy, Raja Radhakant Deb, Keshub Chandra Sen, etc. But when they saw that the missionaries were only preaching religious education, they tried to withdraw their support. But for the first time they broke the ice in a circumstance where even a "daughter was not as welcome as the son."<sup>4</sup>

Nineteenth century intelligentsia understood women's education by linking it up with their position in the society. For that reason their main thrust was on the abolition of the system of 'suttee', attack on the ban of widow marriage, and criticism of the system of polygamy etc. They concluded that once the women themselves were conscious

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3. H.R. James, Education and Statesmanship in India, 1797 to 1910, p.13.

4. S. Altekar, The Position of Women in Hindu Civilization, p.3.

they would try to have education.

Ram Mohan Roy (1772-1833), the first social reformer of importance, "symbolized in himself the inauguration of modern era in India."<sup>5</sup> Born on 22 May 1772 in a Brahmin family, he had adhered to all the elements of Hinduism. But in the gradual process of the evolution of his thoughts he made a concrete intrusion into the progressive ideas of the West. In the famous Anglicist - Orientalist controversy he strongly sided with the Anglicist in the promotion of English education and its language. He was all in favour of a Western philosophy to be made permanent over the Bengali soil.

The cogency and relevance of his role in women's education lies in his breaking away from the traditional mode of perception and striving for a behaviour entirely European in character. True to the ideals of an original thinker, Rammohan Roy founded the Brahmo Samaj in 1828 to provide a new direction to Indian society. In the later period the followers of Brahmo Samaj were personalities like Keshab Chunder Sen and Akshay Kumar Dutt who greatly contributed towards women's education.

Rammohan Roy found the Bengali women, uneducated, illiterate, deprived of poverty rights, entangled in purdah

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5. Arabinda Poddar, Renaissance in Bengal, Quests and Conformation (1800-60), p.47.

etc. "The conclusion is that only by freeing women and by treating them as human beings could Indian society free itself from social stagnation."<sup>6</sup>

In his movement against the system of 'suttee', he convinced the Government to abolish this barbaric system in 1829 by a legislation. In 1865, he published an extract on the "modern encroachments on the Ancient Rights of Female according to the Hindu Law of Inheritance." In that he argued that "all the ancient law givers unanimously award to a mother an equal share with her son in the property left by her deceased husband in order to that she may spend her remaining days independently of the children."<sup>7</sup>

He pointed out specifically that there was no dearth of educated women in India's glorious past and mentioned the name of Lilavati, Maitreyi etc. to substantiate his argument. Rammohan supported the missionaries in their effort to promote female education. In fact the Serampore group of missionaries were his best friends, with whom he had long discussion about the problem of women's education. He wanted every human being to be the possessor of reason. That was why he told, "how...you accuse them of want of

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6. David Kopf, The Brahmo Samaj and the Shaping of Modern Mind, p.15.

7. English Works of Raja Rammohan Roy, published in three volumes by Srikant Roy, pp.375-76.

understanding?"<sup>8</sup>

But unfortunately Rammohan could not directly participate in the establishment of any institution for women's education. Reena Chatterjee writes that "it was unfortunate that Rammohan did not live to return to India and to introduce and promote female education in this country."<sup>9</sup> But the interpretation which he gave to the understanding of 'women' and women's education was a big boost in this direction. His successors and also the follower of Brahmo Samaj, Keshab Chandra Sen, Sasipada Banerjee, Dwarkanath Ganguly, Ananda Mohan Bose, Durga Mohan Das and Pandit Sivnath Sastri worked with profound zeal for the growth of female education in India."<sup>10</sup>

Keshab Chandra Sen was the most outstanding of all the Brahmo leaders who has carved out a prominent place for himself in the history of women's education. He was having unfathomable faith in English institution. Like Rammohan he, "regarded India's contact with Christian civilization as the surest means of its moral regeneration."<sup>11</sup> To improve the condition of women Keshab sought to promote the intellectual moral and social development "by means of girls schools,

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8. Satish Chandra Chakravarty, The Father of Modern India - Commemoration Volume, Sadharan Brahmo Samaj, Part II, pp.276-99.

9. Reena Chatterjee, Impact of Raja Rammohan Roy on Education in India, p.37.

10. K.K. Datta, Social History of Modern India, p.111.

11. Ibid.

adult schools and moral schools, the publication of books and periodicals..."<sup>12</sup>

The view of Keshab about the position of women in Bengal is quite obvious. While in England,<sup>13</sup> he had delivered a series of lectures on the condition of women. He told, "time was when men and women freely mixed with each other in society in India, when celebrated ladies solved mathematics and science generally, when Hindu ladies entered into interesting conversation with their husband on religious and moral questions and when ladies not only received higher education but even come forward and selected husbands for themselves."<sup>14</sup> He also further pointed out that, "now both men and women have fallen into a low state so much so that it is impossible to recognize in the modern India the noble soul of the ancient Hindu."<sup>15</sup>

But to raise the status of Hindu women, from the morass of such utter degradation, he wanted them to be enlightened. Regarding the nature of education for girls

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12. Annual Report in P.K. Sen, Biography of a New Faith, II, p.277.

13. He had gone to England for a visit, where he gave a series of lectures on Indian women and their problems.

14. An address on the "women in India" at the Victoria Discussion Society, Architectural gallery conduit Street, London, Monday, August 1, 1870 quoted in, Keshab Chandra Sen in England, Diary Sermons, Addresses and Epistles, p.387.

15. Ibid.

he was even more clear. He said "we need an unsectarian, liberal, sound and useful education. An education that will not patronize any particular church, that will not be subservient or subordinated to the views of any particular religious communities, an education free, liberal and comprehensive in character, an education calculated to make an Indian women good wives, mothers, sisters and daughters."<sup>16</sup> Obviously enough Keshab had, in a number of time, sneered at the religious overtone of the missionary education.

In order to pay personal attention to women's education Sen started the 'Brahmo Bandhu Sabha'. This Sabha was formed to give home education to girls. He knew that, most of the girls did not continue their study after the marriage, so in order to encourage it, he started the Sabha to give Anthapur Strisiksha or harem education. This was to supplement the knowledge the girls received at school. A definite curriculum was formulated for this purpose. While some literary training was given, Keshab did not forget to give some amount of religious education. As Chakrabarty says, "this movement for home education for adult and secluded women was no doubt the first of its kind undertaken by Bengalis for the Bengalis."<sup>17</sup>

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16. Ibid., pp.393-94.

17. Usha Chakrabarty, Condition of Bengali Women around the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century, p.40.

In order to promote the home education, another Brahmo leader Umesh Chandra Datta formed the Bamabodhini Sabha in 1863. He also edited a journal named Bamabodhini Patrika which advocated home education for girls. The consciousness among the women was such that they themselves started writing for the journals. The Bamabodhini Patrika was ultimately edited by women jointly with men from 1909 to 1922.<sup>18</sup> Bamabodhini Sabha in a letter to Miss Mary Carpenter,<sup>19</sup> gave some outlines of its policies. These are:

- (1) "Publication of papers and periodicals to improve the intellect of native females;
- (2) Establishment of a system of prize essays for the encouragement of educated females;
- (3) Establishment of schools for the education of adult females belonging to gentle families and of an approved system of zenana training as well as that of conferring prizes for encouragement of such students;
- (4) Offering every assistance that may be in our power for the establishment of girl schools."<sup>20</sup>

In 1864 the Bamabodhini Sabha merged with Keshab Sen's Antapur Strisiksha and both of them tried to extend

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18. Ibid., p.41.

19. She is a great champion of women's education. Her activities are described in the later part of this Chapter.

20. Lotika Ghose, "Social and Educational movements for women and by women" in History of Bethune School and College Cenetary Volume, 1849-1949, p.132.

the home education for secluded women and formal education to girls at regular schools with considerable success. After the success of those two sabhas, as many as nineteen organizations came out to promote home education among the secluded girls.

In 1865 Keshab founded the Brahmika Sabha where an European lady was appointed as teacher to teach handiwork. For the first time the Samaj provided education to all grown up women. The Sen's scheme for formal education proved effective, because it was seen that girls in the normal schools like Bethune College were unable to even simply read and write by 1873, whereas as early as 1863 "students of the Home Education" scheme of Keshab Chandra's and his contemporaries could write correctly and their quality of expression in writing was also good."<sup>21</sup>

On 2 November 1871, Keshab started another school for the grown up women under the patronage of Bharat Sanskar Sabha on secular lines. Mrs. Piggot one time headmistress of Bethune school helped him in his task. There "the number of adult women was 24 in class II, 11 in class III, and the rest in class IV."<sup>22</sup>

After coming back from England, Sen established the 'Indian Reform Association' in November 1870. It had five

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21. Bamabodhini Patrika, 1277, B.S. No.87, pp.202-206, quoted in Usha Chakrabarty, op.cit., p.48.

22. Ibid., p.148.



sections like, cheap literature, charity, female improvement, education and temperance."<sup>23</sup> While in England he was extremely delighted at the enlightenment of women there. There he had praised the philanthropic works of Miss Carpenter. In his address in the meeting he told that, "the warm and philanthropic interest she (Miss Carpenter) had evinced in that (women's education) work, the readiness with which she had risked herself to many inconveniences and hardships entitled her not only to the lasting gratitude of the Indian nation, but to the sympathy and respect of all in England who appreciate useful work."<sup>24</sup> This shows the strong desire of Keshab Sen to promote women's education. There, in his address, he had felt the lack of women teachers. And he also told that, "in Bengal hardly anything had yet been done towards the establishment of these Normal Schools."<sup>25</sup>

Back in India, Keshab Chandra started a Normal Class from 1 February 1871 attached to his Bharat Sanskar Sabha school for women. Miss Radharani Lahiri, one of the students, showed her calibre in becoming a mistress and later she became the headmistress of the Bethune school. Keshab convinced

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23. P.C. Mazoomdar, The Life and Teachings of Keshab Chandra Sen, p.153.

24. K.C. Sen in England, Diary, Sermon, Addresses and Epistles, published by Sati Kumar Chatterjee, p.168.

25. Ibid., p.170.

the government about the success of the women teacher. The Government felt the need of the time and give grants-in-aid to Keshab's school in 1872-73. Miss Piggot was appointed a teacher there. The standard of the teachers became so big that "a lady student of Keshab's training school took part in the deliberation at the prize distribution ceremony of the school which was then a difficult feat for a girl."<sup>26</sup>

Sen was a person with a highly competitive spirit which is unique in him from among the chunk of nineteenth century intelligentsia. When in 1878 the Government allowed the girl students to appear at the entrance examination, in order to spread higher education among girls, it was seen that the girls were showing tremendous success. So in order to give a boost to the higher education, Keshab started an institution in April 1883 which is most popularly known as Victoria College. The college prescribed books for senior and junior certificate examination as well. The institution gave teaching in health, hygiene, science, grammar, composition, history, geography, domestic science. Religious instruction, painting and needle work were also included in the course."<sup>27</sup> The college also gave the teaching as how to be a good women. The success of the college was such that it included general university course in its curriculum.

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26. Usha Chakrabarty, op.cit., p.57.

27. Indian Mirror, 18 March 1883, quoted in Ibid., p.50.

Keshab Chandra Sen worked with tremendous encouragement and contributed a lot towards women's education. Many Brahmo leaders of the same time carried forward his ideals to a great extent.

Dwarkanath Ganguli (1884-1898) a prominent Brahmo leader extended the cause of women's education to certain extent. He edited a Journal called Abala-Bandha, which was published on 22 May 1869. He advocated women's education and his writings were brilliant exposition of his commitment to the cause. He founded a 'Boarding School' for women which was named as Hindu Mahila Vidyalaya in which Miss Annie Akroyd, an English lady was appointed as Superintendent. He started another school under the name of Banga Mohila Vidyalaya which was later on merged with Bethune school on 1 August 1878.

Other Brahmo leaders of prominence had started many journals. From among them, the Mahila edited by Girish Chandra Sen, the Antahpur started by Sasipada Banerjee, the Bharati started by Dwijendra Nath Tagore, the Bharat Mahila, and the Suprabhat started by two graduate sisters Shrimati Kumudini and Shrimati Basanti Mitra",<sup>28</sup> were important. Sasipada Banerjee himself started a school at Ballygunge in 1873. As an important measures of social reform he founded the House for Hindu widows in 1887, and in 1894 he

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28. K.K. Datt; op.cit., p.169.

ably tried the experiment of educating in the home, and students were given stipends for their good progress.

Akshay Kumar Dutt, another dynamic social reformer of the nineteenth century Bengal, contributed with his ideas and activities towards the women's education. He was actively cooperating with Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar in the campaign for widow remarriage. His original views on each subject strongly influenced his contemporaries. According to him a woman could not be a good mother or wife unless she was educated. In 1851, 20 March, he wrote an article in Vidya Darshan where he argued in favour of women's education by keeping in context the division among the intelligentsia and newspapers about women's education. In that article, he fearlessly told that, Hindus themselves had to help their women for their education. He said, "...A few days back in a public organization in England a question was raised whether by imparting lesson to Indian women, any material assistance to them was possible. At this, most of the members of the organization expressed (the view) that "it is just futile for them to impart knowledge to Hindu women. All their efforts will be in vain, unless the Hindus themselves are earnest about it. Therefore, without the generosity of the Indian themselves, the females of this country will not be able to obtain the knowledge."<sup>29</sup> He wanted to let the women

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29. Benoy Ghose, Vidyasagar, Bengali Samaj Part III, pp.125-27.

expose their inner talents. This could be possible only by education. He said in his journal Dharmaniti, "it is a sign of foolishness and barbarity to look upon a wife as only an instrument of satisfying one's lower passions Indriya Sebar Sadhan".<sup>30</sup> He also observed in the same article that "a learned husband Vidyaban Pati is the summum bonum of life. He can find no joy in the company of an illiterate wife Murkha strēer Sahabas and the wife too never approves the ways of a husband who is not of the same mind as her."<sup>31</sup>

Some Brahmo leaders found girls schools at Bhagalpur in Bihar. Missionaries had done nothing substantial over there as far as women's education was concerned. But in 1863, Ramtanu Lahiri, a young Brahmo inaugurated a movement for the emancipation of women and organized the Bhagalpur Mahila Samiti. Also Krishna Nandan Ghosh gave strong impetus to social reform. Sophia Dobson Collet writes that, "after Babu Krishnadhan Ghose had joined the Bhagalpur Brahmo Samaj, it received a strong impetus to work for social reforms. This was mainly directed towards the improvement of the conditions of our women...The Brahmos also exerted themselves in educating the ladies to enable them to mix respectably in social intercourse...."<sup>32</sup> The first girl's school was started by the

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30. K.K. Datta, op.cit., p.162.

31. Ibid.

32. Sophia Dobson Collet, The Brahmo Year Book, p.89.

Indians in Bhagalpur in January 1868 which was named as Mokashada Balika Vidyalaya. This was initiated by Dr. Krishna Nandan Ghose.

It is an obvious fact that only Bengalis had taken the initiative in starting girls schools in Bihar. Because Bihar had not produced such an intelligentsia, by that time, who could visualize the utility of women's education.

Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar stands distinctly in the arena of women's education in Bengal. His multifaceted efforts in that direction uniquely give him the acclaim of a great pioneer of the women's education. Vidyasagar (1829-91), born in a remote Bengali village could visualize that the present degrading Indian society could be made dynamic through Western philosophy. Both in his ideas on education and women's education Vidyasagar revealed his capacity to build a new from the base of the old. The same objective influenced him to work for the female education.

To improve the position of women, he smashed the age old prejudice against widow remarriage. In his efforts of organizing meeting, publishing tracts and pamphlets, and taking help of puranas and shastras to prove his point, he was constantly supported by men like A.K. Dutta, Keshab Chandra Sen, Dwarkanath Tagore. His single handed determination with practical action carried him to the extent of convincing the Government about his plan. The abolition of the ban on widow remarriage with the abolition of the

'suttee' gave a big boost to the women of Bengal.

His progressive ideas were reflected in his efforts to promote the women's education. He knew that the development of women's education needs the destruction of the Hindu prejudices. He first demolished those obnoxious Hindu practices.

Towards 1857, Government had already started giving grants for women's education according to the recommendation of the Education Despatch of 1854. The Government had shown special interest towards Bethune College and especially Governor-General Dalhousie had shown extraordinary interest for it. In 1857, Rs.5,000 were granted by the Government towards women's education. Taking this advantage, Vidyasagar as the Assistant Inspector of Schools, started girls schools in Burdwan, Hoogli and 24 Parganás.

The Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, Halliday, always consulted Vidyasagar about the problem. When Halliday showed some practical difficulties about the problem of women's education, "an undaunted Vidyasagar told Halliday that there was nothing that could not be achieved, given determined will and sincerity."<sup>33</sup>

This strong determination led him to start a female school at Jowagong in Burdwan district on 15 April 1857. The school was having 28 girls from 4 to 11 years of age, "the

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33. Binoy Ghose, Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, p.60.

majority of whom are daughters of respectable Brahmins and Kayasthas of the place."<sup>34</sup> There he saw that not only the public but also the girls themselves were taking unusual interest. Also during this time Vidyasagar in a letter to the Director of Public Instruction asked Government to give monthly grants to the female school. His request was amply responded as the Government found Vidyasagar a real genius in women's education. So in the context of this favourable response Vidyasagar "between November 1857 to May 1858 established 35 girls schools with an average total attendance of 1,300."<sup>35</sup> These 35 schools were divided in the following order, "twenty in the Hoogli district, 11 in the Burdwan district, 3 in the Midnapur district and one in Nadia district."<sup>36</sup> In June 1858 he established five more schools for girls.

During this time a severe crisis was seen in the attitude of the Government. When the Government was requested to modify its rules towards grants-in-aid system, it refused to do so holding that, "unless girls schools were really and

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34. Letter from Vidyasagar to Director of Public Instruction on 30 May 1857, quoted in Ibid., p.66.

35. Ibid., p.67.

36. Ibid.



materially supported by voluntary aid, they had better not be established at all."<sup>37</sup>

At this critical attitude of the Government, Vidyasagar was worried to a great extent. He had hoped that for the women's school, the local people would provide necessary accommodation and the maintenance charges would be borne by the Government. But when this hope did not materialize, Vidyasagar faced a terrible financial difficulty because he became unable to give salary of the Pundits of the school he had established which amounted to 3,500 rupees.<sup>38</sup> During this time in order to show his anger over the Government attitude, he resigned from both the posts he had held, as principal of Calcutta Sanskrit College and special Inspector of schools. However, determined, as he always was, he took the initiative in opening a fund for giving financial assistance to girl schools. He went on establishing girls schools after that. Few female schools were started during this time on a monthly grants of Rs.14 or Rs.12 as he secured for these schools. In a bid to convince the Government he wrote to Sir Bartle Frere on 11 October 1863, "you will no doubt be glad to hear that the

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37. Ibid.

38. Vidyasagar was himself bearing the expense towards the salary of the pundits in all the nine schools.

mufossil female schools, to the support of which you so kindly contributed, are progressing satisfactorily. Female education has begun to be gradually appreciated by the people of districts contiguous to Calcutta, and schools are being opened from time to time."<sup>39</sup> The argument of Vidyasagar was such that the Lieutenant Governor Beadon encouraged the fund established by Vidyasagar.

The Government's attitude became extremely cautious towards women's education during the period of 1859-60. It virtually stopped giving grants. The policies of the Government ruined the schools literally, established by Vidyasagar at its very birth. Out of 43, only 9 schools survived and that only due to the help extended by people like Raja Pertaub Chunder Singh and others. But later on a Government official Mr. Laing gave some grant out of his sheer administrative manipulation. This grant helped the rest nine schools to survive.

But it was difficult on the part of Vidyasagar to rescue the dying schools in this circumstance of general hostility shown by the Government. Although many wealthy natives were advocating the cause but "every man in the country is not a Vidyasagar,"<sup>40</sup> as the Hindu Patriot wrote on 9 June 1862.

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39. K.K. Dutt, op.cit., p.155.

40. Quoted in Ibid., p.157.

After this pathetic situation Vidyasagar could get an opportunity to show his talent in Bethune school,<sup>41</sup> established by Mr. Bethune. It was the first secular school started by an European on modern lines.

The name of John Elliot Drink Water Bethune always sounds majestic, whenever any reference is made to women's education in Bengal. A brilliant product of Cambridge, he had come to India in April 1848 to serve as legal member in the Governor-General's Council and by virtue of his position he became the President of the Council of Education. During his stay in India, and also prior to that, he had followed the system of education in India with a great interest. Out and out a liberal, he was very much depressed at the sad plight of India's womenfolk. In order to raise the Bengali women from the position of their degradation, he wanted to start a school purely on modern line. Bethune discussed with almost all the Bengali intelligentsia including Ram Gopal Ghose, and other young Bengal leaders about his plan. "They in their turn promised him all help and expressed readiness to send their daughters to the proposed school."<sup>42</sup>

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41. Bethune school is considered as a milestone in the history of female education in Bengal.

42. Sambad Bhaskar, 10 May 1849. Quoted in J.C. Bagal, "The Bethune School (First Phase)", The Modern Review, (June, 1945), p.468.

After a great deal of deliberations Bethune started a female school at Calcutta which is now most popularly known as the 'Bethune School'. This school heralded the era of revolution in the modern form of female education in Bengal. This school had attracted the favourable attention from the Government and after the death of Bethune on 12 August 1851, Dalhousie specially took the charge of its maintenance. Even the foundation stone of the school was laid by a government official, named Sir John Hunter Litter, Lt. Governor of Bengal on 6 November 1850.

Bethune knew Vidyasagar as a great fighter for the cause of women's education. He had asked Vidyasagar to accept the Honorary Secretary of the School in December 1850. Because he was convinced of his institution's success in the hand of a courageous and honest man like Vidyasagar.

Bethune's wish was fulfilled and Vidyasagar was appointed as the Secretary to the Special Committee formed in 1856 and presided over by Cecil Beadon, one of the Secretaries of the Government of India. As Secretary he got much cooperation from Madan Mohan Tarlankar, Sambhu Nath Pandit, Ram Gopal Ghosh and Raja Dakshin Ranjan. The success of the school under his Secretaryship could be gauged from his Report: "As regards the number of admissions the Committee beg to observe that there has been a steady increase from 1859. The number at present on the rolls is 93."<sup>43</sup> It further went on to observe that, "from the

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43. Binoy Ghose, op.cit., p.69.

manner in which the number of admissions has recently gone on increasing, the committee trusts that the institution is rising in the estimation of those classes of the community for whose benefit it was originally established... The Committee is happy to believe that home education for girls is being resorted to by many families amongst the wealthier classes and this result they believe is in a considerable degree owing to the beneficial influence of the Bethune School."<sup>44</sup> Still with a bit of honesty Vidyasagar had conceded that the prejudices of the Bengalis were still rampart and female education was not able to make strong headway.

In a letter to A. Eden, a top Government official, on 15 December 1862, Bethune had drawn certain rules for the Bethune school. In that he said that, the school was established for girls to give them proper education. He wanted the school to maintain proper restriction about its admission and discipline. The teachers were asked not to interfere in the religious sentiment of any girl. He also wanted the head mistress of the institution to obey the orders of the special committee.

During this time Vidyasagar had entered into a conflict with Miss Mary Carpenter. In 1866, Miss Carpenter happened to visit India. The day she reached here "she expressed her desire to meet the great educationist and

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44. Ibid.

social reformer Vidyasagar."<sup>45</sup> Miss Carpenter once told in a London gathering that, "I regret to say that I saw in Calcutta extremely little effort for female education among the natives, in fact, I am not aware of any school, at any rate, of importance established by the natives in Calcutta. The Government has been in the habit of helping them in utmost."<sup>46</sup> But really speaking the Government was not helping in any substantial manner and Miss Carpenter was wrong in that point, to a certain extent. But the "warm and philanthropic interest she had evinced in that work,"<sup>47</sup> as Keshab Chandra Sen, really invites serious attention.

Miss Carpenter was seriously concerned with the lack of female teachers in India. So she wanted to establish one Normal school for the training of the female teachers. A scheme was made for it and was sent to the Government on 1 October 1867. But Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar opposed it on the ground of social bar. In a letter to the Governor-General he told that, "...I need hardly assure you that, I fully appreciate the importance and desirableness of having female teachers for female learners; but if the social prejudices of my countrymen did not offer an insuperable bar I would

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45. Santosh Kumar Adhikari, Vidyasagar and the Regeneration of Bengal, p.44.

46. K.C. Sen in England, Diary, Sermons Addresses and Epistles, published by Sati Kumar Chatterjee, p.168.

47. Ibid., p.169.

have been the first to second the proposition and I lend my hearty cooperation towards its furtherence. But when I see that success is by no means certain and that the Government is likely to place itself in a false and disagreeable position, I can not persuade myself to support the experiment."<sup>48</sup> In spite of this opposition, he assured his support to the female Normal School. This was evident from the letter of Lieutenant Governor, Mr. Woodrow to Director of Public Instruction on 2 March 1869. Their it was mentioned that, "he kindly offered to give me every assistance in his power in the establishment of the Normal School, though he entertains but slight hopes of its success."<sup>49</sup> But the Brahma leaders like Keshab Chandra Sen and other supported the scheme. The Normal School attached to Bethune School was started in 1869 to train Bengali women teachers. A sum of rupees 12,000 was sanctioned for it and Mrs. Brietzche was appointed its Head. Initially some students joined the class of the Normal School. But ultimately it failed as the school was closed down on 31 January 1872. The most important reason for its failure was that Mr. Brietzche insisted on Christian religious teaching which was not liked by others. The Government in a letter to Director of Public Instruction on 2 June 1872,

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48. Binoy Ghose, op.cit., p.70.

49. Ibid., p.72.

passing the order of the abolition of the Normal School observed that, "on a general review of the whole subject, it is clear that after a three years experiment, the Female Normal School has unquestionably failed."<sup>50</sup>

Vidyasagar's prediction became true and he proved a true prophet.

During this time Vidyasagar disassociated himself from the Committee of the Bethune College. And during his time female education made unprecedented progress which can be realised from the Report of the Public Instruction for 1883-84. It observed that, "of the young ladies who have taken the lead among the more highly educated women is the Bengal's Kadambini Bose, who took B.A. degree in January 1883, is studying medicine in the Calcutta Medical College, and Chandra Mukhi Bose, who has taken the M.A. degree with honours in English has recently been appointed a teacher in the College classes of the Bethune School."<sup>51</sup>

Vidyasagar with an illustrious career passed away on 29 July 1891. In a fitting tribute to the memory of this great fighter of women's education, the educated Indian ladies, founded a Memorial Committee and raised rupees 1670 from among themselves, which they handed over to the authorities of the Bethune School for the foundation of a scholarship in the name of Vidyasagar. He, as a true champion of

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50. Ibid., p.71.

51. Ibid.



Bengali women, built up an unique tradition of strengthening education among them and his name will be remembered by one and all with gratitude.

While discussing about women's education in nineteenth century, Rajah Rakhakant Deb presents an interesting picture before us. Very often, educationists and historians have ignored this great personality. But in term of his merit in the field of women's education he is no less than Vidyasagar or anybody else, for that matter.

Radhakant Deb presents a baffling picture in the horizon of social reform. He opposed both Ram Mohan Roy and Vidyasagar in their efforts to reform Hindu society. But yet, he appeared to be the Bengal's inevitable tool for heralding the desired renaissance. Deb did not want to alter the social fabric of Bengal through English laws and ethics. Yet it is a well known fact that he had deep love for western philosophy. He was for a long time associated with the Calcutta School Book Society. He had established his relationship with the Serampore Missionaries in a variety of ways. In spite of his association, Radhakant Deb developed a strong apathy towards social reform like 'Suttee' and 'Widow' remarriage. This conflict may be due to the circumstance in which he was placed. But as far as his contribution to women's education is concerned it can be bluntly said that, he was one of the greatest champion of women's education in nineteenth century Bengal.

When popular opinion was strong against the women's education, Deb wrote an important book named 'Strisikasa-Vidhayaka' (female education) in 1822 in collaboration with Gourmohan Vidyalankar. In this book he pleaded for women's education, quoting the examples from Shastras and Purans. The book was important for its incisive arguments. He tried to dispel the age old superstitions from Indian minds logically. For example, he argued, "Questions: But old men say that a girl who reads and writes becomes a widow? Answer: Nonsense, it is not 'supported by scripture and our purans refer to educated women".<sup>52</sup> Although in this book, he argued for the domestic and home education for the girls.

Radhakant Deb provided unstinted support to the missionaries in their effort to promote women's education. He gave the manuscript of the book 'Strisikasa-Vidhayak' to Female Juvenile Society to make full use of it. The Female Juvenile Society respected this important book and published the book in March 1822. This book became too important in the missionaries scheme that, "certain chapters of 'Strisikhasa Vidhayak' formed a part of the curriculum of followed in the female school."<sup>53</sup>

As a Native Secretary to the Calcutta School Society, Radhakant Deb once invited the girls of the Female Juvenile Society to appear at the periodical examination with the

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52. R.C. Majumdar, Glimpses, p.60. Quoted in David Kopf, British Orientalism and Bengal Renaissance, p.195.

53. J.C. Bagal, Women's Education in Eastern India, p.106.

scholars of his own society. This was held in his house situated at Sobhabazar in 1821 and 1822. Also Radhakant Deb allowed the girls of the same society to participate in the manuscript proceedings in the Calcutta School Society from 1818-31.

When Miss Mary Ann Cooke came to India as a female teacher, Radhakant Deb was the first native Indian to suggest in a letter dated 10 December 1821 to W.H. Pearce, the European Secretary that, "she might render her services (if required) to the schools lately established by the missionaries for the tuition of the poor girls of Native Christian Females."<sup>54</sup> The Church Missionary Society accepted his suggestion and appointed Miss Cooke as a teacher. After her appointment he wrote in 1821 that, "I am glad to know that the Church Missionary Society has employed Miss Cooke as a female teacher for female education. It would be a very helpful matter if the women who belong to respectable families but are poor get from her some training in practical works along with general education. Such educated ladies will be qualified to be appointed subsequently as home tutoresses in prominent Hindu families. At this there would be no enroachment on the time honoured customs and practices of the Hindus, but there would be spread of

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54. Raja Radhakant Deb's letter to J.E.D. Bethune, see Appendix of Ibid.

education among the women."<sup>55</sup>

When Bethune opened his girl school, he did not invite the leading citizens of Bengal like Radhakant Deb, Raja Kalikrishna, Asutosh Deb and Prasanna Kumar Tagore, nor did he seek the advice of them. This angered Radhakant Deb to the extent that he started a girls school of his own within fifteen days of the opening of Bethune school in his own home at Sobha bazar, Calcutta. Bethune had gone out of his way in ignoring the service of a great champion of women's education.

Radhakant Deb strongly opposed the religious overtones of missionary education. According to him the education should not hurt the religious mentality of the Indian women. His contribution to women's education is immense. And educationists sometimes commit great blunder in ignoring the vast contribution of this great personality towards women's education.

The 'Young Bengal' group sometimes called as 'Derozians' with their utter radicalism and ruthless attack on social customs, created a tradition which provided unexpected dynamism to the women's education.

The Young Bengal groups were follower of a Eurasian named Edward Henry Derozio. They were personalities like Tarachand Chakrabarty (1806-1855), K.M. Bandopadhyaya (1815-68), Dakshina Ranjan Mukhopadhyaya (1814-1878),

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55. Priscilla Chapman, Hindu Female Education, p.75.

Rashik Krishna Mallick (1810-1856), Peary Chand Mitra (1814-1856), Radhanath Sikdar (1813-1870) etc. This 'Young Bengal' group was the product of the Hindu College of Calcutta where they came in contact with the Western philosophy and science. Derozio the leader of the group and himself a product of the Hindu College, believed that the development of man's innate faculties should be the first criterion of any social movement. The embodiment of a challenging intellectual tradition, Derozio went a long way to hasten the emergence of a generations of Bengalis who earned distinction for heralding new era in Bengal's history of women's education.

K.M. Banerjea, though not formally a member of Derozian Club possessed many features of it. He, in 1840, wrote a book called Native Female Education where he gave a flamboyant argument in favour of women's education. In this book he lucidly discussed the backwardness of Indian women and argued for the advancement of their education. He was in favour of girls getting education in their own home. He cited the example of the daughter of Prasanna Kumar Tagore, who was strongly effective in the domestic education. For the purpose of domestic education, he wanted the European ladies to be employed at home. In his way to convince the native Indians, he appealed to all the conscious Indians to adopt the cause immediately. Banerjea was strongly against the Christian teaching and attributed

the failure of Christian mission solely to it. He said that, "in those schools little had been done in an educational way though much attempted in the catchising way."<sup>56</sup>

Another prominent figure in the 'Young Bengal' group was Ram Gopal Ghosh. He made efforts through the British Indian Society to help the promotion of female education. He once offered two prizes, one gold and another silver, for the best essays on the 'Native Female Education'. This was conducted in Hindu College in 1842. Two students named Madhusudan Datta and Bhudeb Mukherjee got the first and second prizes respectively.

In the establishment of the Bethune College, Bethune had fully depended on Ram Gopal Ghosh and he was Bethune's "Principal Advisor in the first instance,"<sup>57</sup> and procured for him his "first pupils".<sup>58</sup> In order to procure a piece of land to set up the school, Ram Gopal himself had accompanied Bethune to all prominent men like Dakshina Ranjan Mukherjee and others. Dakshina Ranjan Mookherjee "offered a free gift of a site for the school, of five bighas of land valued at 10,000 rupees, in the native quarter of the town",<sup>59</sup> "as soon as his desire was made public."<sup>60</sup>

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56. Third Report of William Adam, quoted in J.C. Bagal, op.cit., p.130.

57. J.A. Richey, Selections from Educational Records, Part II, p.52.

58. Ibid.

59. Ibid.

60. Ibid.

Peary Charan Mitra and Radhanath Sikdar, actively cooperated with the educational movement for Bengali women. Both of them. founded a monthly journal called the Mashik Patrika in 1854. It was in this paper that the novel "Alaler Gharer Dulal" was serialised, for which pioneering work, Peary Chand occupies a permanent place in the history of Bengali literature.

Peary Charan Sarkar another Young Bengal leader opened a school at Barasat in 1847. He was assisted by his brother Kalikrishna Mitra and Nobin Krishna Mitra. The success of the school was such that, the Council of Education remarked, that, the example set by these gentlemen will be shortly followed by their dedicated brothers in other places.

People like Tarachand Chakrabarty, Guru Charan Yush, Rashik Lal Sen, Motilal Seal (popularly known as Rothschild of Calcutta), Haladhar Mullick, also contributed their help and support towards this great cause of women's education.

A combination of the efforts and understandings of the nineteenth century intelligentsia helped exploding the age old prejudices against women and ushering in an era of unremitting progress in the field of women's education. Their conscious assessment and logical argument brought the problem of women's education to the limelight of nineteenth century Bengal. They roused the popular opinion in favour

of the problem. Their unflinching struggle for the cause, compelled the otherwise reluctant British Government to declare its official policies towards women's education.



## CHAPTER - IV

### THE POLICY OF THE COMPANY AND THE CROWN TOWARDS THE EDUCA- TION OF WOMEN

Initially, especially during the first half of the nineteenth century, East India Company showed utter disregard for women's education. In this period education for men was also an insurmountable obstacle which was of course thrown aside later on. No strand of British Philosophy (whether conservative or liberal) supported the institution of women's education in a subjugated dependent country like India. The authority even did not bother to think about it. J.A. Richey delineates this fact very vividly. He writes, "prior to the receipt of the Despatch of 1854 from the Court of Directors female education was not recognised as a branch of the state system of education in India. The attention of the authority does not appear to have been directed to the subject until many years after they had adopted definite measures for the education of boys. The education of girls was left entirely to the fostering care of individuals and private societies. This is evident from the fact that in none of the general despatches relating to educational matters submitted to or received from the Court of Directors during the first half of the century is there any reference to the education of Indian girls and women."<sup>1</sup>

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1. J.A. Richey, Selections from Educational Records, Part II, p.32.

The hostile attitude of the Government had been strengthened by Indians themselves who attached all the dogmatic beliefs to the position of women. Women had been the largest victim of the irrational thinkings of the Indians. Whatever little amount of education was allowed to them, they were strictly restricted. The general picture of the education of girls on the whole was most unsatisfactory, because they received no formal instruction whatsoever except for the little domestic instruction that was available to the daughters of the upper class families.<sup>2</sup> This strong apathy of the Indians themselves towards their own womenfolk strengthened the notion of the British authorities that Indians did not want education for their women. This belief of the Government is squarely put by Richey. He says, "the authorities both in England and in India were of the opinion that any attempt to introduce female education, when there was no demand for it, might be regarded by the people as an interference with their social customs."<sup>3</sup> William Adam in his Report for the Bengal Presidency submitted in 1835 observed that, "a superstition existed in many Hindu families that on receiving education, a girl when married, would become a widow."<sup>4</sup> The Report presented

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2. Report of the National Committee on Women's Education, 1958-59, p.54.

3. J.A. Richey, op.cit., p.32.

4. William Adam, Report on Vernacular Education in Bengal and Bihar submitted to Government of India in 1835, 1836, 1838, ed. by A.N. Basu, p.131.

a picture of the existing thinking of Hindu and Muslim minds about their women before the Government.

The British authority for the first time took up the responsibility for the education of Indians by the Charter Act of 1813. It provided that "a sum of not less than a lac of rupees in each year shall be set apart for educational purposes."<sup>5</sup> During this time there emerged two schools of thought around the nature of education to be introduced in India. The first school of thought better known as the "Anglicist School", of which Lord Macaulay was the celebrated representative, advocated the introduction of western culture and language. For him the aim of education in India was to create a class of Indians who would be "Indians in blood and colour but English in tastes, in opinion and in intellect."<sup>6</sup>

The second school of thought, known as the 'Orientalist School' argued that while there should be continuation of Western culture and science, the Sanskrit and Arabic education should not be discouraged. In Bengal, this school of thought was very strong. In this period of strong educational controversy, no body cared to think about the education for women. But even without the official patronage, women's education was taken up by the missionaries in a

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5. Syed Narullah and J.P. Naik, A Student History of Education in India, p.49.

6. Quoted in Margarita Barns, India Today and Tomorrow, p.176.

herculean way.

During this time the newly produced nineteenth century Bengali intelligentsia strongly pleaded for women's education. They interpreted the Hindu literatures in favour of women's education and created a mass opinion for that. They also pressurised the Government to take up suitable measures to initiate official policies towards women's education. In fact, they presented a highly formidable pressure group which the British Government could not ignore. Towards the middle of the nineteenth century, the Government no more found it convincing or rational to ignore the demand of the Bengali people for women's education. Lord Dalhousie was the first Governor General to show active interest in female education. His interest was really conditioned by Bethune who had established the famous 'Bethune School' for girls on a purely modern and secular basis. Richey observes that, "the establishment of the Bethune school in Calcutta in May 1849 may be regarded as the turning point in the annals of female education in India. Hence forward not only the educated but also the influential members of Indian society began to show an active interest in the cause. The minute of Lord Dalhousie's is the first official pronouncement indicating the future policy of Government in regard to female education. It marks the close of the era of non-interference and the beginning of that of open encouragement."<sup>7</sup>

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7. J.A. Richey, op.cit., p.47.

It is clear from the arguement of Richey that, Dalhousie by trying to close down the chapter of non-interference wanted to inaugurate the period of official encouragement and support for women's education. At that time Bethune held a very important official post as the President of the Council of Education. He most forcefully wanted to advocate women's education and considering the importance of the post he held it can be emphatically put that his efforts had tremendous impact on Government's decision. In a letter to Dalhousie on 28 March 1850 he mentioned that, "the eagerness of the children to learn, and their docility and quickness correspond fully with what we have seen of the Bengali boys, and in the judgement of their intelligent teachers far surpass what is found among European girls of the same age."<sup>8</sup> He also convinced the Governor General that the native intelligentsia had shown unusual enthusiasm for female education. In this case he mentioned the name of three important Indians viz., Ram Gopal Ghosh, Dakshina Ranjan Mukherjee and Madan Mohan Tarlankar. He wrote to Dalhousie that, "the earnestness and good feeling with which they have undertaken this work was shown by their replying to me, when I offered to bear the expense of building a school house for them, that they would apply to me in case of need, but they hoped to raise a

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8. Ibid., p.53.

sufficient subscription among themselves, which I understand they have since done."<sup>9</sup>

After presenting all these realistic facts before the Governor General Dalhousie, he wanted the Government to extend its official support for the women's education. He wrote that "I am of opinion that the time is come, when all that is needed to secure their complete success is a declaration on the part of Government that it looks on them with a favourable eye."<sup>10</sup> Bethune went on arguing with Dalhousie that his experiment in the field of women's education can yield successful results. Because he was confident that he would receive encouragement from every quarter of Bengali Society. Bethune was highly optimistic that if the Government declares its open support for women's education, no opposition will come from any side. With a fervent appeal to the Government he recommended in his letter to Dalhousie that, "the Council of education be informed by your lordship in council that it is henceforward to consider its functions as comprising also the superintendence of native female education, and that whenever any disposition is shown by the Natives to establish female schools, it is to give them all possible encouragement and further their plans in every way that is not inconsistent

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9. Ibid., p.54.

10. Ibid.

with the efficiency of the institutions already under their management."<sup>11</sup> He also appealed to Government that "special instructions should be issued to the Magistrate calling their attention to the growing disposition among the Natives to institute female schools, and to the annoyances and persecutions, by which in some cases endeavours have been made to stifle them, directing them to use all means in their power to make it known that the Government views the establishment of such schools with great satisfaction to encourage their promoters in all proper ways."<sup>12</sup>

According to Bethune it was on the part of the Government to convince the people that female education was not imposed upon them rather it was done keeping in line with their own wishes. He wanted Dalhousie to inform Queen Elizabeth in England about this important subject. According to him, "It will not be one of the least remarkable triumphs in India which will have redounded to the honour of Her Majesty's regime that in the time of a female sovereign a beginning should be made towards emancipating so many of her female subjects from the degradation and misery which are now their lot."<sup>13</sup>

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11. Ibid., p.55.

12. Ibid.

13. Ibid., p.56.

Lord Dalhousie promptly responded to Bethune's incisive argument. He wrote to Bethune on 1 April 1850 that, "in circulating this letter I am glad to place on record my full and unreserved approval of the main object, which my honourable colleague has had in view in his labours for the foundation of a female school in Calcutta."<sup>14</sup> He praised the novel experiment of Bethune in the noble cause of education and assured him that, his experiment "has earned a right not only to the gratitude of the Government but to its frank and cordial support."<sup>15</sup> He also promised to strongly recommend women's education to the Council of Education and the court of Directors in England. Putting strong faith on the future importance of Bethune's mission, he wrote to him that, "I truly believe that you have planted the grain of mustard seed; and that it will one day be a great tree which you and those whom we serve may be proud to look upon."<sup>16</sup> The Government was convinced to such an extent that, the foundation stone of the Bethune school was laid by a Government official named, Sir John Hunter Litter, the then Deputy Governor of Bengal.

After the tragic death of Bethune, Dalhousie personally took over the maintenance and management of Bethune School.

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14. Minute by the Marquis of Dalhousie, dated 1st April 1850, quoted in Ibid.

15. Ibid.

16. Quoted in S.C. Ghosh, Dalhousie in India, p.44.



The amount of effort he put in this direction can be very well realised from a Report which came in the Hindu Intelligencer on February 6, 1854. There it was mentioned that, "we believe it is generally known that since Mr. Bethune's death, the Governor General has supported entirely at his own cost the Native Female School which has been about 700 rupee per mensem."<sup>17</sup> Dalhousie strongly opposed the system of levying of fees from the students as was suggested by the Court of Directors, as he thought that the system was counter productive.

The favourable response of the Government towards women's education in general and Bethune School in particular can be assessed from the Government's Despatch dated 4 September 1850. There is was observed that "we fully appreciate the intentions of Mr. Bethune in the establishment of a female school in Calcutta and approve the instructions which you have addressed to the Council of Education through the Government of Bengal, to encourage in every way not inconsistent with the efficiency of the institutions already under their management every disposition shown by respectable natives to establish similar seminaries."<sup>18</sup>

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17. Quoted in J.S. Bagal, 'The History of the Bethune School and College', in The Bethune School and College Centenary Volume, p.21.

18. Quoted in J.A. Richey, op.cit., p.61.

In spite of a favourable response, it was closely observed that the Government was proceeding with utmost caution on the fear that women's education may be considered by the people as an interference in their sentiments. This was clear from the same Despatch where it was stated that, "but with reference to the opinions and feelings of the natives in respect of female seclusion, great caution and prudence will be required in carrying out that part of your instructions of the 11 April 1850, which directs the Chief Civil Officers of the Mofussil to use all the means at their disposal for encouraging these institutions."<sup>19</sup> The Deputy Governor of Bengal Sir John Litter had also sounded a similar type of warning in his minute dated 2 April 1850 where he mentioned that, "it appears to me also that suspicious, ill disposed natives may consider it subser- vient in some degree to the views of proselytism."<sup>20</sup>

But the doubt of the Government could not stop the progress of education. The warnings seemed to be rarely formal. Because immediately after that the official measures of the Government was declared through the famous Despatch of 19 July 1854.<sup>21</sup> In that, it was clearly stated that,

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19. Ibid.

20. Quoted in Ibid., p.57.

21. This Despatch was most popularly and perhaps incorrectly known as "Woods Despatch" as has been shown by S.C. Ghosh in his article "Dalhousie, Charles Wood and the Education Despatch of 1854" in History and Education, Summer 1975, London, p.37.

"the importance of female education in India cannot be over-rated; and we have observed with pleasure the evidence which is now afforded, of an increased desire on the part of many of the natives of India to give a good education to their daughters. By this means a far greater proportional impulse is imparted to the educational and moral tone of the people than by the education of men. We have already observed that schools for females are included among those to which grants-in-aid may be given and we cannot refrain from expressing cordial sympathy with the efforts which are made in this direction. Our Governor General in Council has declared in a communication to the Government of Bengal that the Government ought to give to native female education in India its frank and cordial support."<sup>22</sup>

The importance of the Despatch for women's education was so much that, S.N. Mukherjee wrote, "it began a new era of organized educational administration, defined the aim of Indian education, determined the Government's attitude towards religion, stressed mass education and recognised the need for technical and women's education."<sup>23</sup>

The Despatch of 1854 strongly advocated the Grants-in-aid system in the context of women's education. The policy of Grants-in-aid was important for the fact that,

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22. J.A. Richey, op.cit., p.388.

23. S.N. Mukherjee, History of Education in India, p.130.

it included in it the responsibility of the native people themselves to cooperate with the Government. The Despatch stated that, "we have therefore resolved to adopt in India the system of grants-in-aid which has been carried out in this country with great success; and we confidently anticipate, by thus drawing support from local resources in addition to contributions from the state, a far more rapid progress of education than would follow a mere increase of expenditure by the Government."<sup>24</sup> The system of Grant-in-aid carried a lot of importance as far as the future of the women's education was concerned. Because the whole Government's action was directed on the line of Grants-in-aid as far as its policy towards women's education was concerned.

One of the positive aspects of the Grants-in-aid system was that, religious education was excluded from the school curriculum. It vehemently stressed the need for secular education in all the schools run by grants-in-aid system.

After the Despatch of 1854, Government took over the charge of Bethune school at Calcutta and Mr. Cecil Beadon, a Government's official was appointed as its Secretary. A committee was formed under him and some influential native people were included in it as members. Government exempted all students from paying fees and free books were supplied. Free transport was arranged for those who were coming from

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24. Quoted in J.A. Richey, op.cit., p.378.

distant place. In 1857, Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar was appointed as the special Inspector of Schools for four of the Bengali districts, named Hooghly, Burdwan, Midnapur etc. He was promised of all possible help by the Government. Taking advantage of his special position he established as many as 35 girls school with 150 students.

During these initial periods of Government's enthusiams, there occurred the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857, which has been called by some historians as the first war of Indian independence. Religious question was the most burning issue of the Mutiny. Now Government became absolutely aware of the fact that religious neutrality was an utmost requirement of the time. And this led them again not to interfere in the beliefs of Indian society. Keeping this policy in view, the Government slackened its enthusiasm for women's education as it thought that encouragement of women's education could be branded as a religious interference. So the Mutiny was followed by "an emphatic declaration of the policy of social and religious neutrality by her Majesty the Queen."<sup>25</sup> Severe financial disaster followed the Mutiny as the Indian Education Commission pointed out, "the Mutiny of 1857 brought however financial stringency to the Government and it failed to keep

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25. Y.B. Mathur, Women's Education in India (1813-1966), p.29.

its promise of financial help to these schools."<sup>26</sup>

After the Mutiny of 1857, the administration of India was passed from East India Company to the British crown. The Crown sent a new Despatch in 1859 which was known as Stanley's Despatch. It reaffirmed all the principles laid down in the Education Despatch and wanted to make the system of grants-in-aid to be more effective. It made a frank admission that women's education had not progressed much and even the gigantic efforts of the missionaries had not helped much for the growth of women's education. The Despatch further said that, "the Court of Directors when sanctioning the assumption by Government of the Charge of Mr. Bethune's school, gave their cordial approval to the Order of the Government of India that female education should be considered to be as much within the province of the Council of Education as any other branch of education and the Court's interest in the subject was further expressed in their Despatch of July 1854 in which it was moreover declared that schools for females were to be included in those to which grants-in-aid might be given."<sup>27</sup>

After the 1854 Despatch some female schools were started in Howrah and Dacca with the help of grants-in-aid system. Mr. Woodrow, the inspector of school had guessed

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26. Quoted in Usha Chakrabarty, Condition of Bengal's women around 2nd half of the nineteenth century, p.47.

27. Quoted in J.A. Richey, op.cit., p.435.

that, female education would progress very smoothly. He gave his support for the Government supported instructions in schools. But Stanley's Despatch made a warning that, "both the difficulties and the importance of female education are adequately appreciated by the officers of the Department of Education", and invited the views of the Governor-General in Council "as to the nature and degree of the influence which may safely and properly be exerted by the officers of the Department of Education to promote the extension of schools for female."<sup>28</sup>

Referring to the grants-in-aid system, it observed that, "the assignment of Rs.1000 per mensem for the establishment of female schools in Hooghly, Burdwan and the 24 Pergunnahs, a portion to be expended on a limited number of model female schools to be supported by Government, and a portion on grants-in-aid to some of the female schools, which had been established as Government schools by Pandit Iswar Chunder Surma (Principal of the Sanskrit College) while Inspector of schools around Calcutta, but the entire maintenance of which by Government has been disallowed, as not being in accordance with the grants-in-aid rules."<sup>29</sup>

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28. Quoted in Ibid., p.444.

29. Educational Despatch, No.4, dated 7th April 1859, from the Secretary of State to the Government of India. Quoted in Despatches on Education in India, A Collection of Despatch from the Home Government, on the subject of Education in India, 1854 to 1868, p.136.

This observation of Stanley made the grants-in-aid system more restrictive in nature. This clearly states that, Government was having still some reservations about female education.

During this period, a restructuring of the administrative set up was done by the Government. In this process different municipalities were created in different cities in order to give a smooth structure to administration. These municipalities included in it the members from the native people. For rural areas a committee was set up, which was known as the Local Fund Boards. These municipalities and local Fund Committees, did a great job in expanding the female education. But the peculiarity of these committees was that, some members in them were too liberal and some were too conservative. Due to this there was no uniformity among them.<sup>30</sup> Some of them strongly supported women's education and some of them opposed it. But in the midst of this conflict a good number of primary schools were established between 1870 and 1882.

If Dalhousie was a liberal utilitarian, his successor Lord Canning was a bit conservative. He strictly held the view that, girls schools should be established by 'voluntary aid'. In issuing a circular he observed that, "Government had no desire to take the initiative in the case of girls

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30. Report of the National Committee on Women's Education, 1858-59, p.16.



schools as it had done in the case of boys, but was ready to encourage existing schools by grants-in-aid."<sup>31</sup> During this period the Report of the Government on Public Instruction in Bengal for 1862-63 stated that, women's education was progressing satisfactorily.

A detail official view of the nature of women's education was presented by the Government in 1867, when Miss Mary Carpenter wanted the Government to establish the Female Normal School to train teachers. There she suggested that in view of the inadequacy of the female teachers, it was highly imperative on the part of the Government to make adequate arrangement for female teachers. The Government while responding to her suggestions, brought out some of its thinking about the female education. It observed that in spite of many obstacles female education was progressing. This was both due to the efforts of the Indians themselves and the help of the Government. A good result was achieved because, "it was the policy of the Government to support from imperial resources the best educational institutions and simultaneously provide aid to many other inferior institutions."<sup>32</sup> By giving a general statistics on all India level, the Secretary to Government of India observed

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31. Monier Williams, Modern India and the Indians, p.325.

32. Y.B. Mathur, op.cit., p.34.

that, altogether 6,19,260 boys and girls were studying in different schools with a sum of 82,17,069 rupees spent on it. Of this figure 42,617 were girls out of which "18,617 were educated solely at Government expense in the mission and other aided schools."<sup>33</sup>

Lastly, referring to Miss Carpenter's suggestion to establish Female Normal School, the note observed that, such an experiment had not been successful due to the basic reason that, "all the English teachers who came all way from England, and sometimes almost all the girl students also got married and left the school. The Government therefore considered it expedient to saddle itself with all the trouble and expenditure which was involved in establishing such institutions."<sup>34</sup> But in later period, the Government could not ignore the growing demand for Normal School and a good number of them came up.

In 1877, the Viceroy Lord Lytton passed a decree where he made different provinces responsible for the over-all progress of education. This assumption of additional educational responsibility by the provincial Government had good effects on the higher education for women. In 1878 in order to give a high boost to higher education for women the Bethune school with its elementary education and the

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33. Ibid., p.35.

34. Quoted in Ibid., p.37.

Banga Mahila Vidyalaya with its higher standard were amalgamated to one which was known as the Bethune English school for girls. The Bethune school grew up into a full fledged college; the only institution of its type, with an enrolment of 6 students.<sup>35</sup> During this time "in all there were 2,697 institutions for girls including primary, secondary and mixed schools and training institutions for teachers with an enrolment of 27,066 students."<sup>36</sup>

In comparison to primary and secondary education, higher education for women was not progressing rapidly in Bengal Presidency. By 1883 there were only two women graduates in Bengal. When in 1877 Miss Chandra Mukhi Basu, student of the Native Christian Girls' school applied to the Calcutta University for permission to appear in the Entrance Examination the University observed in a resolution that, "female candidates shall be examined in a separate place under the superintendence of ladies. No female candidate shall be admitted to any examination without presenting a certificate, in the form to be prescribed by the Syndicate, signed by a member of the Senate or the Head of an affiliated institution. Female candidates shall be allowed to take up the subjects prescribed for the B.A. course with the option of substituting French, German,

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35. Report of the National Committee on Women's Education (1958-59), p.20.

36. Y.B. Mathur, op.cit., p.38.

Italian or an Indian vernacular for the second language. The names of the successful candidates shall be submitted to the senate every year before the convocation to enable them to be admitted to the Degree of Bachelor of Arts."<sup>37</sup>

After making this observation, the Syndicate of the Calcutta University permitted both Chandra Mukhi Basu, a student of the Native Christian Girls School and Kadambini Bose, a student of Bethune College to appear in its Entrance Examination. Both the candidates passed the examination with third and second division respectively. Describing the event, the Vice-Chancellor of Calcutta University observed that, "it is a subject of peculiar satisfaction that I am privileged to preside today at the admission of these ladies to the degrees they have so honourably won. I congratulate them on their success. I congratulate the University on their incorporation among its graduates; more than all I congratulate the women of India, of whom they are the representatives and the pioneers."<sup>38</sup> He believed that the success of these two women could make unprecedented impact on women's education. The Bengali intelligentsia like Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar congratulated these two women and Miss Chandra Mukhi Basu was presented a set of Shakespeare's work by Vidyasagar as presentation. The event stimulated

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37. K.K. Datta, Social History of Modern India, p.121.

38. Ibid., p.171.

Government's interest in women's education and special scholarships were instituted for the course.

The Report of Public Instruction of the Government of Bengal for 1978-79 by attaching great importance to the event observed that, "the educational history of the year has been made noticeable, among other things, by the fact that a young Bengali lady has for the first time passed one examination of the University."<sup>39</sup> It also mentioned that, "the young lady's success was mentioned with high approval by His Excellency, the Viceroy on the occasion of the Prize distribution at the school. The Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal also sanctioned the creation of a special junior scholarship of seventy five rupees for Miss Kadambini Bose benefit and she was presented with a prize of books to the volume of Rs.60."<sup>40</sup>

Miss Kadambini Bose was presented the scholarship with the condition that, the scholarship would continue for two years if she studied in the First Arts Class. To fulfil this condition a college was needed to be set up immediately. In the meanwhile the Government had opened a school at Dacca in June 1878 with an improved curriculum. The school was known as Eden Female School. The Government with a similar

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39. J.S. Bagal, "History of the Bethune School and College" in The Bethune School and College Centenary Volume, p.38.

40. Ibid.

curriculum opened a college in 1879 which was attached to Bethune school. The Report of the Government brought out following observation about the event,

"In consequence of the success of Miss Kadambini Bose and in accordance with her desire to continue her studies to the First Arts Examination, the Lieutenant Governor consented to the proposal to raise the status of the school by appointing a lecturer qualified to teach the First Arts Course. With this object, Baboo Sasi Bhusan Dutt, M.A. was transferred from the Cuttack College and his time now is fully engaged in Bethune School.<sup>41</sup> Both Kadambini Bose passed the First Arts Course with flying colours.

With tremendous encouragement and support from the Government, Bethune School marched forward and in 1882 sent up another two girls named Kamini Sen and Swarna Prabha Bose for the Entrance Examination. They also succeeded in passing the examination with first and second division respectively. Later on these two students studied for the F.A. Examination.

Almost all the young ladies who were showing tremendous potentialities for higher education, belonged to East Bengal and not to Calcutta. The Report of the Directors of Public Instruction observed that, "the example which they (these girls) have set will not be thrown away; indeed we hear

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41. Ibid., p.39.

already of other schools following the lead of the Bethune school and the Free Church Normal School though these have secured the distinction of being the pioneers of the higher education in Bengal."<sup>42</sup>

The movement for women's education had taken firm root in Bengali soil during 1880. The Bethune College, the Free Church Normal School, the Victoria College, the Eden Female School of Dacca, the Christ Church School etc. had become the centres for higher education for women. The grants-in-aid system was made more liberal. Government was providing full financial assistance to institutions like Bethune school and college, the Eden school at Dacca, Free Church Normal School etc. A good number of training schools were set up and a fair amount of women teachers were produced in the 70's and 80's of nineteenth century Bengal. Girls had started taking university education and even in medical education, they had marked their presence. By 1882 as many as 42,071 girls attended mixed school in India. A separate data for the number of girls in mixed school in Bengal is not available. Primary and secondary education had made some progress in Bengal during the time the Education Commission was set up. The 1881 census stated that "out of 101 million women only 1,17,000 were receiving instruction and about 2,32,000 knew to read and write their mother tongue. This meant that one for every 850 women was attending school and

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42. Ibid., p.41.

one for every 430 women knew her mother tongue."<sup>43</sup> In this over all situation the education commission headed by William Hunter was set up by the Government in 1882. While discussing the problems of Indian education, Hunter focussed particular attention on the difficulty of women's education.

Hunter analysed the whole problems, confronting the Indian women with great insight. He "exerted all his talent and eloquence in spreading and infusing a right spirit among the people wherever he went during the inquiries."<sup>44</sup> In an honest and sincere exposition, Hunter observed that, women's education had not made much progress in India and even in the most advanced province, "98 per cent of the girls of school going age were still outside the schools and that, out of their total population of 99.7 million no less than 99.5 million were unable to read and write."<sup>45</sup>

By going to find out the reasons for such a low status of women's education, Hunter pointed out that Indians did not consider their women as a means to provide them any type of livelihood. In a forceful language he wrote that, "in the

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43. L. Bullaya, On Education (Occasional Speeches), p.94.

44. J.J. Johnson, Abstract and Analysis of the Report of the Indian Education Commission with Notes and the Recommendation in full, p.94.

45. Report of the National Council on Women's Education 1958-59 Para 17 quoted in Y.B. Mathur, Women's Education in India, p.40.



first place, the effective desire for education as a means of earning a livelihood does not exist as regards the female part of the population."<sup>46</sup> Secondly, the peculiar customs like child marriage and close seclusion of women were some of the most important reasons which kept the girls out of the schools.

The most difficult situation arose, according to Hunter, out of the lack of sufficient women teachers. Of course certain steps were taken, yet it had not fulfilled the demand of the time fully. The curriculum of the schools were framed to suit the education of boys.

Absence of rewards was also a contributory factor for the unpopularity of the women's education. The Commission pointed out that, "if the advantage of the intellectual training of women could be set before native parents in the same material form as is the case in regard to the education of boys, the prejudices against female instruction would doubtless disappear. But it is not likely that any large number of women in this country will obtain any higher forms of remunerative occupation and female education has, therefore, to rely on the much weaker stimulus supplied by desire for education for its own sake and by comprehension of the value of intellectual culture. Although it is possible that as instruction becomes more general among men, a larger amount of interest in, and sympathy with, the cause of female

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46. Ibid., p.95.

education will be manifested, it is to be feared that this cause cannot be expected to make very rapid progress for a long time to come."<sup>47</sup>

The Commission pointed out that the Indian people were themselves responsible to a great extent for all those obstacles in the path of women's education. He suggested that "practical difficulties exist which cannot be solved by any recommendation of a Commission or even by the zealous section of Government but only by the growth of public opinion among the native themselves."<sup>48</sup>

Hunter suggested a whole lot of recommendations to remove the anomalies and to give a sound direction to women's education. In his package of recommendations he gave over all primacy to the grants-in-aid system. He pointed that, grants-in-aid to girls schools were too low and that should be increased all round. Considering the immatured stage of women's education, it was suggested that public funds like local, municipal and provincial funds should be collected and diverted entirely to the girls schools. The commission viewed that, "there are so many obstacles to the progress of female education, that, we think the condition on which aid is granted to it should be

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47. Quoted in Y.B. Mathur, op.cit., p.42.

48. Quoted in J. Johnson, op.cit., p.97.

made as early as possible, lest they defeat their own object."<sup>49</sup> So it suggested that, "the grants-in-aid code should be revised, in the various provinces so as to afford aid to girls schools on easier terms as regards rates to be paid, the attendance of scholars, the standard of instruction, fees, scholarships, the teaching of English and the provision for boarding accommodation."<sup>50</sup>

With regard to the curriculum and text books, the Commission observed that, there should be different curricula for boys and girls and the curriculum for that of girls should be more oriented towards practice and reality. It was further pointed out that the existing curriculum in all girls schools did not suit to women's education and whatever text-books were selected for girls, they were not selected with sufficient care.

Instead of charging fees from the students, it was suggested that they should be given scholarships and prizes in turn. With a lot of analysis, Hunter observed that the most important factor for the lack of success of women's education was due to the absence of incentives like scholarships. He made it clear that, in order to attract more girls to schools and retain them there for a longer period, measures like concessions in fee, award of prize and scholarships should be instituted.

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49. Report of the Indian Education Commission, quoted in Lakshmi Mishra, Education of Women in India 1921-1966, p.38.

50. A. Croft, Review of Education in India in 1886, p.288.

Secondary and higher education should be encouraged in the areas where there was enough demand for it. Availability of women teachers was the greatest obstacle faced by the promoters of women's education. According to the Commission, male teachers could not be done away with immediately, but female teachers should substitute them generally. Establishment of training schools by the Government was strongly recommended. It was also suggested that training schools under the private management should be given liberal aid. Hunter observed that, "inducements were to be offered to the wives of school masters, to widows to qualify themselves as teachers, so that a system of pupil-teacher relationship could be established."<sup>51</sup>

Hunter clearly formulated the opinion that mere introduction of formal education could not improve the state of women's education in India. Because many girls just could not leave their home for some reason or other. For this a method should be evolved for those who could not leave their home for study. The system of "zenana teaching" was recommended to avoid the difficulty. The Commission said that, the zenana mission of the past had been a successful experiment and it approved that, "we see no reason why the secular instruction, imparted under the supervision of ladies worthy of confidence should not be recognised and assisted, so far as it can be tested by a proper inspecting

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51. Y.B. Mathur, op.cit., p.42.

agency."<sup>52</sup> As far as financial grants for the zenana institution was concerned the Commission suggested that, "the grants for zenana teaching be recognized as a proper charge on public funds, and be given under rules which will enable those engaged in it to obtain substantial aid for such secular teaching as may be tested by an inspectoress or other female agencies."<sup>53</sup>

Considering other problems relating to women's education, the Commission observed that, girls faced a lot of difficulties by travelling from a longer distance to attend the school. So a type of Boarding School could be started where girls could stay and pursue their study. The school managers had to make provision for this.

Touching upon the administration and management of the girls schools the Commission gave following suggestions. According to Hunter, it might be found that Municipal and Local Boards were not ready to take over the charge of school administration. In the case of their unwillingness it was better not to give them any responsibility as far as the management and administration of the school were concerned. In case a Board wanted to take the responsibility the authority should effectively inspect it.

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52. Lakshmi Mishra, op.cit., p.39.

53. Quoted in J. Johnson, op.cit., p.101.

Women's education, as the Commission observed, carried with it some specific aims. These aims were to give secular and rational education to women to enable them to acquire real knowledge about society and life. In order to see that the schools perform their role effectively in carrying out these aims, it was necessary to utilise the services of sympathetic and well qualified inspectress. So the Commission recommended for "the greater use of school inspecting agencies, and for the establishment of an alternative standard for high schools corresponding to the matriculation examination."<sup>54</sup>

For the smooth internal management of the school, the Government should take the help of all interested ladies. They could be either of European or of native origins. The Commission strongly recommended that a share of the supervision of each school should be given to native people without whose help nothing could be achieved most effectively.

As far as the question of co-education was concerned, the Commission did not support it. It allowed co-education for boys and girls below the age of seven. While opposing the system of co-education the Commission opined that, "mixed schools for boys and girls (above seven years of age) were not recommended by the Commission, as they were unsuited to the conditions of the country."<sup>55</sup>

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54. Y.B. Mathur, op.cit., p.43.

55. Ibid., p.42.

The Report of the Hunter Commission is considered as one of the outstanding documents in the history of Indian education. The package of recommendations suggested by the Commission for the future growth of women's education was most vital as far as the policies of the Government was concerned. Some realistic steps were suggested by the Commission to solve the problem of Indian women's education.

The Government had accepted the recommendation of the Commission in toto. All the proposals appeared to be just and necessary and were approved by all the local Governments also. Now "the policy of the Government of India was to follow the principles laid down by the Indian Education Commission for the promotion of women's education."<sup>56</sup> But let us see, to what extent the Government of Bengal had implemented the recommendation of the Commission practically.

In the context of financial recommendation the Commission's Report was fully taken as granted. In all the provinces, grants-in-aid was given to the girls school on more easier terms. In Bengal Presidency aid was given either by fixed monthly grants or by capitation grants. The rules attached to above types of grants are as follows. In the first type of aid (fixed monthly grant), the maximum rate was fixed at one half of the total expenditure, or higher than generally allowed for boys schools. In the second type

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56. Ibid.; p.43.

of aid, (capitation grant) the capitation grant<sup>57</sup> of 4 annas a month was given for every girl under regular and efficient instruction. This system was applied to all girls schools situated in Calcutta but, was "later on extended to the rest of the Bengal."<sup>58</sup>

All the schools were placed under the exclusive supervision of the Inspectoress. Now all the schools were given aid not in terms of results, but in terms of attendance, the standard of instruction, and the number of boarders. This system was known as Calcutta system. R. Nathan pointed out that, "Girls schools at Calcutta and its neighbourhood are aided on a different system from that of the rest of the province and is known as the Calcutta system. It is a payment by result system modified by the attendance of the pupils."<sup>59</sup>

The girls schools in other parts of Bengal were aided by means of stipends and rewards by the Department of District Board. These Boards were contributing from the primary grants placed under their disposal. Sometimes they were assisted by the municipalities. During the year ~~1881-92~~ to 1886-97 "the proportion of their direct expenditure on

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57. Capitation grant was a particular type of aid given to the schools situated only in Calcutta. But later on it was extended to other areas in Bengal.

58. Alfred Croft, op.cit., p.289.

59. R. Nathan, Progress of Education in India, 1897-98  
Vol.I, p.304.



secondary and primary education which they devote to girls schools has risen from 3.8 to about 5 per cent."<sup>60</sup> As the schools in other parts of Bengal did not come under the Calcutta system, the girls from these schools were allowed to attend the several departmental examinations for boys, with the option of taking up needle work instead of mensuration, geometry and physics.

From 1892 to 1897 the total expenditure on primary and secondary schools increased from 7,73,028 rupees to 8,75,961 rupees or by 13 per cent.<sup>61</sup> There was a marked increase in the amount paid from provincial revenues to schools under public management and the amount from local and municipal funds, but fees and "other sources together provide three fourth of the total."<sup>62</sup>

There was a considerable amount of opinion prevalent, that girls should be exempted from fees. The Education Commission had also recommended it. Under these circumstances it was not surprising to note that, "in the case of primary schools for boys, fees amounted to more than 33 per cent of the whole expenditure, whereas in the case of primary schools for girls they come to 6 per cent,"<sup>63</sup> so in primary school

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60. J.S. Cotton, The Third Quinquennial Review of the Progress of Education in India from 1892-93 to 1896-97, p.305.

61. Ibid.

62. Ibid.

63. Y.B. Mathur, op.cit., p.43.

hardly any fees was charged.

Keeping in tune to the recommendation of the Hunter Commission, scholarships were given to girl students. They were also given slates, toys and trinkets as incentives. Sometimes prize was more attractive and popular than scholarships. So some scholarships were converted into prizes. Besides scholarship for girls "such as the two senior and two junior Government scholarships, and a share of the upper primary scholarships allotted to the different districts, girls are eligible for boys scholarships."<sup>64</sup>

The Presidency of Bengal strongly objected to the recommendation of the Commission on co-education. The Government of Bengal observed that general opinion was now in favour of the co-education schools and remarked that, "the experience of every inspecting officer in Bengal confirms the high value which the Bengal provincial committee attached to mixed schools. The competition between the girls and boys is of the utmost value in stimulating the progress of both. It must of course, be understood that these girls are practically all under 10 years of age, and that condition assigns the only necessary limit to the extension of the mixed school system."<sup>65</sup> The Government also saw no opposition from the native people themselves about co-education towards

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64. J.S. Cotton, op.cit., p.305.

65. Quoted in Y.B. Mathur, op.cit., p.44.

the end of nineteenth century. In other provinces like Madras, Berar, Assam, the system of co-education got massive popularity. In the gradual process of time, mixed education gained the popular support. The popularity of the co-education can be tested by the percentage of girls in public boys schools in all provinces. "Bombay and Bengal have more than one third and the central provinces nearly one third",<sup>66</sup> of the girls reading in co-education schools. The following statistics will show the number of girls in the co-education schools.

Table

	Year	No. of girls in co-education schools
In all India level	1881-82	42,000 students
In all India level	1885-86	86,000 students
Bengal	1881-82	23,000 students
Bengal	1885-86	35,000 students
Bombay	1881-82	14,000 students
Bombay	1885-86	22,000 students
Madras	1881-82	14,000 students
Madras	1885-86	17,000 students

Source: Y.B. Mathur, Women's Education in India, 1813-1966, p.46.

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66. J.S. Cotton, op.cit., p.25.

The recommendation of the Commission that girls schools be placed under the direct supervision of the District and Municipal Boards was not followed in Bengal Presidency. Here almost all the schools were placed under the exclusive domain of private management and the District and Municipal Boards. They contributed a lumpsum amount of fund from under their disposal. But in Madras Presidency, Government managed all the girls schools and it had to take over all the girls schools, which were formally under the District and Municipal Boards.

Female Training Schools did not increase in a satisfactory speed after the recommendation of Hunter Commission. Except in big towns like Calcutta and in schools under missionary management, there were few female teachers found in other schools. The view that the wives of the male teachers could be trained and thereby letting them to train the girls at school did not yield much result. The difficulty in the procurement of women teachers was rightly described by Miss Brock, a Government Inspectoress. She in her Report of 1906 noted the deplorable standard of women students at the Government Adult Training School and noted that they hardly could go up beyond the second or third standard.<sup>67</sup> The peculiar position of widows in the Bengali society which exposed them to every odds in public schools if they became

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67. Third Quinquennial Review of the Progress of Education in Bengal 1902-03 to 1906-07, p.83.

teachers, the reluctance of the male teachers to not to serve under any female boss, whom they would regard inferior in sex, were some of the added factors which proved disastrous for any attempt to give a boost to the scheme of women's teacher training school in Bengal. The Government of Bengal once tried to utilise the women from "Baishnav sect"<sup>68</sup> as teachers, but this failed.

During the middle of 1880 the Government faced a severe financial crisis. So it could not afford so much of its financial help to the women's education. During this time the private enterprises helped to compensate the luckwarm support of the Government.

The total number of girls under public institutions rose from 241,568 to 360,006. During the middle of 1880 there was severe famine in Bengal and this did not effect the attendance of girls in schools. There was a considerable amount of increase in attendance in the nineteenth century Bengal but the rate of progress in term of percentage was more in Madras, Burma and Coorg provinces. The following table will show the rate of increase in each provinces.

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68. The women of the Baishnav sect had good reputation in the line of teaching in some aristocratic families in the past.

Table

Number of Girls in Public Institutions in India  
during 1886-87 and 1891-92 to 1896-97

Province	1886-87	1891-92	1892-93	1893-94	1894-95	1895-96	1896-97	Percentage of Increase or decrease	
								1891-92 compared with 1886-87	1896-97 compared with 1891-92
Madras	64,635	93,905	100,199	100,804	100,125	102,162	107,465	+45	+14
Bombay	47,300	67,432	68,341	71,571	73,956	75,665	71,053	+43	+ 5
Bengal	81,592	88,731	92,743	96,047	103,768	104,574	105,919	+ 9	+19
N.W.P. and Oudh	11,358	10,307	10,307	10,117	10,325	11,113	12,114	- 4	+11
Punjab	11,070	12,002	12,312	12,812	13,141	13,527	13,489	+ 8	+12
Central Provinces	5,678	7,833	6,374	9,186	9,183	9,855	10,797	+38	+38
Burma	12,852	18,666	21,069	22,028	22,640	24,939	26,409	+45	+41
Assam	5,184	5,136	6,043	6,807	7,562	7,959	8,276	- 1	-61
Coorg	486	725	792	805	832	832	775	+50	+ 7
Berar	1,413	2,020	2,125	2,857	2,960	3,444	3,709	+43	- 4
<b>Total</b>	<b>241,568</b>	<b>307,388</b>	<b>320,305</b>	<b>332,984</b>	<b>344,492</b>	<b>354,070</b>	<b>360,006</b>	<b>+27</b>	<b>-17</b>
Percentage of increase compared with preceding year	-	-	4	4	3	3	2	-	-

Source: J.S. Cotton, Third Quinquennial Review of the Progress of Education in India, 1892-93 to 1896-97, p.283.

During the 80's and 90's in nineteenth century primary education was becoming more popular in Bengal. In all India level it was seen that the number of primary schools had increased from 4,514 to 6,039 the rate of increase being 16 per cent. The number of Government school had increased by 37 per cent during 1886-87 but it decreased to 18 per cent during 1896-97. It is also important to note that the pupils in aided schools had increased considerably. The unaided schools increased by 5 per cent in 80's but later on it was increased by 34 per cent.

As it is told earlier, primary education had considerably increased in the Presidency of Bengal during the period 1887 to 1897. The rate of increase in this Presidency was 19 per cent and the number of girl schools had risen from 2,682 to 3,204.<sup>69</sup> The number of students had increased from 52,402 to 64,064 almost about 22 per cent. Deducting 2,211 boys found in girl schools and adding 37,852 girls attending boys schools it was found that the total number of girls in the primary schools had increased by 19,916 or 20 per cent.<sup>70</sup> The increase of primary school was occurred in each and every part of Bengal except in Chittagong district. In most parts of Orissa, more than half of the girls joined the boys school. But in Calcutta very few girls

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69. J.S. Cotton, op.cit., p.304.

70. Ibid.

were found in boys school, the number being 95 out of 6,979.

The secondary school for girls did not show any satisfactory change in the last two decades of the nineteenth century. There were secondary schools both in English and vernacular languages. The English Secondary School showed little change in all India level. The total number of such schools were 236 and pupils being 19,636.<sup>71</sup> In this school majority of the pupils were Europeans. The number of Hindu and Muslim students were relatively very low. So English Secondary School did not help for the growth of women's education.

In the vernacular secondary schools, Europeans were not at all represented. In 1880 the number of schools rose from 113 to 203 in all India level. During this time some primary schools were converted into secondary schools. In the 1990's the number of students in secondary girls school had decreased in Bengal Presidency.

In Bengal it was observed that high schools for girls had decreased from 16 to 12 and the number of peoples from 1,576 to 1,242. This decrease was due to the decrease in the representation of Christian Community. But the representation of the Hindu had increased considerably. Out of six high schools for Indian girls, as many as four were situated

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71. Ibid., p.290.



at Calcutta. The Bethune high school was most important among them, which passed twenty pupils at the Matriculation during 1886 to 1896. The success of this institution was due to the help of influential Indians and a substantial aid from the Government. The Eden Female School at Dacca was also maintained nicely by the Education Department. Other four high schools were aided institutions. Two of them were aided by the missionaries. The high school at Bankipur with fifty three pupils was raised from the upper primary grade to the level of high school.

The middle English schools were all attended by European girls and middle Vernacular schools were attended by the Indian girls. The middle English schools decreased from 23 to 22 but with an increasing number of students from 2,385 to 2,767. The middle vernacular schools rose from 22 to 27 but the number of students decreased from 1438 to 1340. All these schools were maintained by the system of grants-in-aid.

Higher education made smooth progress after the Report of the Education Commission. A comparative data between the year 1891-92 and 1896-97 give some informations about the growth of College and special schools in all India level. (The Table is produced in the next page).

In India, the total number of Arts College had increased from 45 to 87 and to 177 in 1901-02. The number of professional

Table

Number of girls in colleges and special schools in 1896-97

Province	Arts College	Profess- ional College	Train- ing school	Arts school	Medical school	Other special schools
Madras	16	2	320	30	25	518
Bombay	18	20	162	19	1	5
Bengal	33	14	475	-	44	4
NWP & Oudh	15	-	83	-	-	54
Punjab	-	7	-	-	4	237
Central Provinces	-	-	23	-	-	-
Burma	-	-	87	-	-	171
Assam	-	-	18	-	-	10
Coorg	-	-	-	-	-	-
Berar	-	-	2	-	-	-
Total	87	43	1170	49	74	999
Total for 1891-92	45	31	819	51	87	323

Source: J.S. Cotton, Third Quinquennial Review of the Progress of education in India, 1892-93 to 1896-97, p.288.

colleges had risen from 31 to 43. The number of female students in Training schools rose from 819 to 1170. A large part of this growth was nominal because most of the training classes were held in ordinary girls schools chiefly in Bengal and Burma. The growth of Art schools and medical schools was also nominal. Bengal Presidency possessed three Art Colleges for female students during 1890. They were Bethune College, Loretto House and La Martiniere. All were situated in Calcutta and Bethune College was exclusively maintained by the Government. Out of a total of 33 female students studying in College level, 23 belonged to Bethune College; Out of 23 female students six were studying in B.A. In term of racial distribution out of 33 college students, 10 were Europeans, 10 native christians, 11 Brahmos and 12 Hindus. During the period of 1890's, two women achieved M.A. degree, seven B.A. degrees.

The Bethune collegiate school which had done a commendable job in the middle higher education was progressing steadily. It had 138 students of whom 70 were Hindus, 55 Brahmos and 13 Native Christians.<sup>72</sup> It was a good sign that large number of Hindu had joined the school. During this time a variety of special scholarships like Premchand Roychand scholarship, Padmavati medal, were instituted to

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72. J.S. Bagal, "History of the Bethune School and College", in Bethune School and College Centenary Volume, p.51.

encourage female students in their study. The students in Bethune women's college were permitted to take general university course, but in most cases the Calcutta University provided them with more option in the selection of courses than the boys.

Before 1883 neither the Calcutta University nor the Calcutta Medical College admitted girls for medical course. Miss Abala Das and Miss Ellen D'Abrew, were refused admission in the Calcutta University on the ground of sex. But later on popular opinion became so strong in favour of medical education for women that Government could not ignore it. The first Bengali to get admission in Calcutta Medical College was Miss Kadambini Bose who got her B.A. from Calcutta University. She was admitted to the Calcutta Medical College in 1883. After completing her course, she proceeded to England for higher study. Later on she was made the first lady Superintendent of the Dufferin Hospital.

Lady Dufferin had taken special interest for strengthening medical education among women. Now special arrangements were made so as to enable the girl students to study in the medical college and four other medical schools in Calcutta. Girls who came to Medical College after the completion of F.A. course, were getting scholarships. In the Medical schools, special privileges were made available to girl students and various scholarships were offered to them.

During 1896-97, there were as many as four students, studying in the medical college, besides other ten studying in the class of a female certificate course, the duration of which was of 4 years. In the medical schools, 35 had passed the final examination for diploma and three others for compounder's examination. At the end of 1897, it was found that one female student had M.B. degree and another that of L.M.S. The number of women in the medical science continued to increase, till 1901, there were 51 girls (six of them Hindus including Brahmos) in medical schools and colleges in Bengal.<sup>73</sup> The Zenana system of teaching was not at all encouraged in Bengal during the last part of the nineteenth century, although it was strongly recommended by the 1882 Education Commission.

In Bihar a general consciousness for women education was not so strong even in the last part of nineteenth century. In spite of that, primary education for women was promoted mostly by Bengalees residing in Bihar. The most important event in the history of women's education of Bihar was the setting up of a high school in 1892 by Shrimati Ahore Kamini Devi, a Bengali who was residing in Bihar.

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73. Usha Chakrabarty, op.cit., p.55.

Another most important aspect of women's education was directed towards vocational training in nineteenth century Bengal. This was associated with the growing Indian nationalism towards last part of the nineteenth century. The purpose of the vocational education was to utilise the spare time in the home and to give a vocation to fall back upon, if need be, in times of distress.<sup>74</sup> The Bengali Nationalists in order to promote the indigenously produced handiworks, organised a fair in 1867, where goods produced by women was exhibited. In 1886 another fair was organized by an organization called 'sakhi samati', where for the first time handiworks done by women were exclusively exhibited which had attracted the attention of the Government. In the Simla Conference of 1901 the Government proposed to encourage technical training among women.

Judging from different dimensions it can be safely argued that the policy of the British Government towards women's education had taken a definite shape towards the end of the nineteenth century. Although the Government was not taking any aggressive step for the promotion of education among women, still it can be said that it was not putting any obstacle on the path of its progress. The end of

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74. Third Quinquennial Review of the Progress of Education in Bengal 1902-03 to 1906-07, p.125.

nineteenth century witnessed the spread of women education in a multifarious direction. Women had come to achieve university education, medical education and technical education etc. Special scholarships and rewards were instituted for the specific purpose to promote the women's education. The development of women's education in the nineteenth century Bengal was very slow but yet it was smooth and steady.

## CHAPTER - V

### CONCLUSION

The progress of women's education in Bengal is marked by many vicissitudes in its course of development throughout the nineteenth century. But a comparison between the first and last decade of the nineteenth century sufficiently signifies that, women's education was placed in a much more secure footing in the later period, than in the former. In the initial phase of the century women's education faced a number of crises. The most crucial of them was the apathy both of the Government and the public. So the origin and the initial encouragement of women's education were associated with the activities of the missionaries. They played their role understandably well, however, without being able to transcend a serious limitation. This limitation lay in the nature of education they imparted to Indian girls. The strong religious overtone of their education not only played havoc with their own integrity but also for the growth of women's education itself. Because first, they personally invited the wrath of some sensitive Indians and secondly they could not popularise the cause for which they were so seriously striving for. For that reason, it was found that majority of girls who attended the missionary schools were coming from the lower section of the



society. Sometimes these girls were given various types of incentives. Their emphasis on the vocational education was purely secondary. The most important part played in the field of women's education were William Carey, Ward, Alexander Duff and Mrs. Wilson etc. Mrs. Wilson was a highly imaginative lady who saw in India a great opportunity for popularising women's education. In spite of her emphasis on religious education, she was greatly helped by many Indians because of her genuine and honest interest for the cause.

The greatest contribution of the missionaries lay not on the quantitative multiplication of schools for girls but in fact of their successful propagation of the importance of women's education in the Bengali society. They started a unique phase in Indian history and were optimistic enough of its success. The Indian minds came to be influenced to a great extent by the missionary ideals.

Nineteenth century India witnessed the emergence of twin forces of Western progressive ideas and social change. The scientific temper and rational outlook of the west gave Indians a fresh opportunity to reinterpret their society. Thus Indian society acquired a new dimension. In this situation Bengal produced a set of modern intelligentsia who with courage and conviction rapidly attacked the Indian tradition. The people who constituted this group of intelligentsia were great personalities like Ishwar Chunder

Vidyasagar, Rammohun Roy, Keshab Chandra Sen and Radhakant Deb etc. The vital factor for the success of the women's education therefore was due to the concerted efforts of the nineteenth century intelligentsia. They played their role basically in three ways. First, they reinterpreted the Hindu Sastras and Purans. Secondly by reinterpreting them, they convinced the Indians that nothing was there against women's education. Thirdly by creating a popular base for their understanding, they pressurised the Government to change its general apathy towards women's education. The nineteenth century intelligentsia were men of farfetched imagination. By going in favour of women's education they mainly directed their attention towards a wider process of social change in the Indian society. For them, without a change in the existing structure and thinking of the Indian minds, women's education could not be popularised. This understanding led them to start a vigorous period of social change. According to them women's education could be encouraged on the basis of a social change.

Without belittling the role of others, it is emphasized that Iswar Chunder Vidyasagar played a more vital role than others, especially by his practical association with the movement for women's education. He, in his personal and official capacity had tried to provide sufficient dynamism to it. Sometimes historians tend to ignore the importance of

the "Young Bengal" group in the context of women's education. But they were far more radical in their approach to the nineteenth century social problems. The uniqueness of the "Young Bengal" group lay in their overt condemnation and denigration of the past Indian tradition. The motive for social reform was also strengthened by the missionaries, who posed the danger of conversion before the Indian society. The nineteenth century intelligentsia, could understand this well and social reform became a highly important issue in their course of action.

The main cause why Government could not ignore the women's education any longer was that the Bengali society had been greatly awakened during the middle of the nineteenth century. The newly emerging intelligentsia had become its chief spokesman and the demand for women's education was growing stronger and stronger. Dalhousie, who personally believed that, a "social revolution" in the position of Indians was going to take place, supported with all his capacities the cause of women's education. He was greatly helped by another man of great importance, J.E.D. Bethune. Dalhousie and Bethune had constant interaction with the Indian society and its problems. They were to ascertain degree instrumental in convincing the British Government the urgency of starting women's education. Although the first sign of the official encouragement was hinted at in the Education Despatch of 1854, yet it was the Education Commission of 1882, which

brought out a systematic policy of the Government for women's education. The attitude of the Government was still conditioned by caution and careful speculation. But once the wind started blowing in favour and got momentum, it could not be stopped.

Procurement of female teachers in those days was a highly difficult task. Mary Carpenter, a British lady who came to India on a special mission in 1860, was highly responsible for the setting up of Female Normal Schools. The training schools for girls were multiplied in large numbers towards the last part of the nineteenth century. Primary education made sound progress and at the end of the century, it had achieved sufficient momentum. Secondary and higher education also became successful among Indian women. Things went so smoothly that women had come to get medical education. 44

Nineteenth century Bengal provides interesting and wider scope to study the condition of Indian women. Because it was in this era that the problems of Indian women had caught the eyes of the public and the Government. During this time, steps were taken to eradicate the 'suttee', 'monogamy', 'infanticide' etc. And it was in this era that education for women had become a crucial issue both for the Bengali public and the British Indian Government. For all these reasons women's education marched forward without any

major hindrances so much so that it was in a better and healthier position at the end of the nineteenth century than it had ever been in its crises ridden history.

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