

Evils of Child Marriage, Gender Consciousness and Social Reform Movement in Colonial Bengal

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ARTICLE DETAILS

Article History

Published Online: 10 November 2018

Keywords

Evils of Child Marriage, gender consciousness, impact of western education, role of contemporary periodicals, social reform movement in colonial Bengal

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ABSTRACT

'I saw my daughter lying on the cot, weltering in blood.....'. This statement given in court by Radhamonee Debi, mother of ten or eleven year old Phulmonee Debi, who died of marital rape by her husband in 1890. Her death was widely reported and discussed, and in 1891 Indian reformers persuaded the colonial government to raise the minimum age of consent for married girls to twelve. Because child marriage was the order of the Bengali society and violation of this social practice was universally condemned. The marriages of boys and girls were celebrated at an early age. None had the courage to violate the sacred law or *Shastric* injunction which enjoined the marriage of a girl before the age of puberty. Therefore, child marriage, a harmful custom in our society, produced the most shocking of evils. So, 'gender consciousness' and 'women question' have had an ambiguous relationship with the nineteenth century social reform movement. Most British colonial and missionary writings viewed the position of women in India before their advent as one of the extreme degradations. In fact, the condition of women in India becomes one of the principle means for the empire to justify its 'civilising mission', and to 'reform' the 'depraved' customs of India. This article intends to highlight the evils of child marriage in the Bengali society and in this respect, growth of gender consciousness by the impact of western education and contemporary periodicals and social reform movement in the colonial Bengal.

1. Introduction

'I saw my daughter lying on the cot, weltering in blood.....'.¹ This statement given in court by Radhamonee Debi, mother of ten or eleven year old Phulmonee Debi, who died of marital rape by her husband in 1890. Her death was widely reported and discussed, and in 1891 Indian reformers persuaded the colonial government to raise the minimum age of consent for married girls to twelve. This article intends to highlight the evils of child marriage in the Bengali society and in this respect, growth of gender consciousness by the impact of western education and contemporary periodicals and social reform movement in the colonial Bengal.

2. Evils of Child Marriage

Child marriage was the order of the Bengali society and violation of this social practice was universally condemned. The marriages of boys and girls were celebrated at an early age. None had the courage to violate the sacred law or *Shastric* injunction which enjoined the marriage of a girl before the age of puberty. This feature of the Hindu social life of Bengal did not fail to attract the notice even some European writers. For example, Scrafton observes, "They are married in their infancy, and consummate at 14 on the male side, 10 or 11 on the female and it is common to see a woman of 12 with a child in her arms. Though barren woman of rare among them, yet they bear but few children, for at 18 their beauty is on the decline, and at 25 they are strongly marked with age."² In this connection, a conservative Bengali newspaper *Dainik O Samachar Chandrika* commented that, "It is the injunction of the Hindu *Shastras* that married girls must cohabit with their husbands on the first appearance of their menses..... and all Hindus must implicitly obey the injunction And he is not a true Hindu who does not obey it If one girl in a

lakh or even a crore menstruates before the age of twelve, it must be admitted that by raising the age of consent the ruler will be interfering with the religion of the Hindus....."³ From the above extract, it may easily be understood that, this newspaper furiously opposed the Age of Consent Bill.

It is a fact that, the girls had no voice in the choice of their husbands in those days and their opinions were seldom respected. Sometimes an accomplished and well-read girl was married to a husband who was deaf and little educated, a beautiful girl was married to a blind man, or a young girl was married to an old man. The girls had no right to protest against these cruel practices of the society which subjected them to great hardship. Not only was that, the evils of child marriage due to a great extent to the triumphant *Kulinism* of the age. Polygamy had become a regular habit with the *Kulins*, and they expected a substantial dowry in each marriage. In such circumstances any sincere attachment on the part of the husbands to their wives could hardly exist and the poor child girls had to spend most of their times in their parental houses.⁴

Therefore, child marriage, a harmful custom in our society, produced the most shocking of evils. As example we may note here the following figures:

'In 1819 there were amongst Hindus, Sikhs, Jains and Buddhists 89,051 boys below the age of 4 who were married and 223,560 married girls of the same age. The number of widows below the age of 4 was 10,644. The number of married boys between 5 and 9 years of age is nearly 6 lakhs and two thousands and that of girls over 18.5 lakhs. The total number of married males below the age of 14 is 2,725,124 and that of girls is 6,871,999. The number of widows between five and six

years of age is 52,759 and of those between 10 and 14 years of age are 143,100. Of these, two lakhs and more of widows below the age of 14 all but some 4 thousand are Hindu proper.⁵ On the other hand, between 1815 and 1820 only sixty-two child-widows (aged below 18) were burnt in the Lower Provinces of Bengal, and this constitutes less than 2% of the total number of *Satis* in this period.⁶

In fact, 8 or 9 was the usual marriageable age of girls at the advent of the British rule. With the introduction of western ideas and civilization the educated sections of society began to feel the necessity of deferring marriages to a more advanced age.⁷ It is necessary to mention that, the *bhadralok* reformers who were themselves the victims of early marriage became conscious of its bad effects in the 1850s.⁸ The following table shows how early marriage was popular even among the educated families:

Name	Age when married	Age of wife
Debendranath Tagore	14/15	6
Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar	14	8
Rajnarayan Bose	17	11
Keshab Chandra Sen	18	9
Satyendranath Tagore	17	7
Kaliprasanna Sinha	14	
Ramesh Chandra Datta	16	
Sibnath Sastri	12/13	10
Bijoy Krishna Goswami		6
Bankim Chandra Chatterji	11	5
Jyotirindranath Tagore	19	8

Source: *Sahitya Sadhak Charitmalā*, Vols. 1-6, Bangiya Sahitya Parishat.

3. Gender Consciousness

It may be said that, 'gender consciousness' and 'women question' have had an ambiguous relationship with the nineteenth century social reform movement. Most British colonial and missionary writings viewed the position of women in India before their advent as one of the extreme degradations. In fact, the condition of women in India becomes one of the principle means for the empire to justify its 'civilising mission', and to 'reform' the 'depraved' customs of India.⁹ Different reasons had combined to degrade women's position in the society, of which the arrival of the British and the subjugation of the country was an important one. Child marriage, the refusal of the right to study, the exaltations of the *Puranic* ideologies, in particular the elevation and propagation of the 'Sita cult' etc. promoted women's domesticity and subordination. In this respect, the growth of gender consciousness in the nineteenth century may be attributed to a number of factors. But here some specific points are being highlighted which may broadly be represented from two stand points: i) Impact of western education and ii) Role of contemporary periodicals.

3.1 Impact of western education

The introduction and growth of western education was perhaps the most important single factor in the Indian awakening. Hence, it is necessary to discuss the growth of western education in Bengal where it first spread among the

middle class people and largely moulded their life and thought.¹⁰ The beginning was made with the foundation of the Asiatic Society in January 1784. For an awakening of interest and curiosity in their own past, which largely infused into the Indians a sense of self-respect, the Asiatic Society founded by Sir William Jones played a noticeable role. By laying emphasis on rational knowledge the Asiatic Society helped the growth among the Indians of an intelligent understanding of their national culture through scientific research. The works of Sir William Jones, James Prinsep, Alexander Cunningham, Dr. Maximilian Muller, Horace Hayman Wilson, Charles Wilkins, James Fergusson, Mr. Edwards Thomas, Rajendra Lal Mitra and others unearthed and threw a flood of light on India's great heritage and ancient glory. These instilled into them a floating sense of pride and self-confidence.¹¹

Towards the end of the eighteenth century the ideas of Montesquieu, Voltaire, Rousseau, Hume and others began to reach the Indian shores. These made a profound impression on the inquisitive and responsive Bengali middle-class mind. The western impact was first felt in Bengal - "Bengal was moved far more powerfully than the other Indian provinces by the new ideals of freedom and equality of the 18th century European illumination, which the British brought with them".¹² European rationalism and individualism also deeply influenced the Bengali intellectuals. It was Bengal where the British rule was first established and English education was first introduced. So, it was only natural that Bengal was the precursor in the growth of gender consciousness in India in the nineteenth century.

The effects of English literature and Western philosophy on the educated Indians were not insignificant. As a vernacular paper remarked, "It is their Wilberforces, Hampdens, Mills, Brights, Metcalfes, Macaulays, and hundreds of other luminaries, whose liberal principles have captivated us, and we have regarded them as the very model of morality, and hold them in veneration". As Percival Spear writes, "All this attention was to the new class as water in a thirsty land, avid as it was for respect. When it came from the new world of the West, the source at the same time of so much criticism and scorn, it was balm indeed".¹³

The current of Western culture and civilization was at that time practically sweeping away most of the educated Bengalis and they devoted themselves to the cause of upholding Hindu cultural heritage and turning the tide of Westernization.¹⁴ It was only in the third decades of the nineteenth century that efforts were made, more by enlightened individuals than by institutions, to ameliorate condition of the women. In the succeeding years institutions, imbued with liberal outlook, led a movement for improving the condition of womenfolk through diffusion of knowledge.¹⁵ The gender consciousness thus initiated, was a part of the nineteenth century Social Reform Programme. Rammohun and 'Sati', Pandit Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar's campaigns for widow-remarriage and against child marriage and Kulin polygamy, the daring radicalism of Young Bengal, and the repeated splits within the Brahmo movement (Cooch Behar marriage of Sunity Devi, daughter of Keshab Chandra Sen) essentially on the issues were closely related to the women's question.¹⁶

It is true that, whether educated or not, the first major event in the life cycle of a girl was marriage. During the latter half of the nineteenth century the nature of this institution began to change. A different style of marriage gradually developed, assimilating new qualities of romantic love and companionship.¹⁷ The question of arranged marriages raised a major point of difference between Hindu and English ideals. The English ideal of marriage was intertwined with notions of love and romance. A number of people in nineteenth-century Bengal began to voice objections to arranged marriages, where the partners had usually never seen one another before the marriage ceremony. The ideal of mutual growth in marriage was used as an argument to explain and defend the practice of child marriage, condemned by the British. It was said that, in a society where a woman had a definite role to fill in the household hierarchy, she had to be trained into that role when she was young and flexible, before she had developed independent ideas. Although, the British continued to harp on the barbarity of child marriage. In 1872, a Marriage Act was passed through Brahma efforts, setting the minimum marriageable age for non-Hindus at fourteen for girls and eighteen for boys. More direct measures were seen to be necessary and were taken in the Age of Consent Bill of 1891.¹⁸

3.2 Role of contemporary periodicals

As has been mentioned that, there will be a discussion of another important factor for gender consciousness i. e. the role of contemporary periodicals. From the early nineteenth century the number of newspapers and journals in India nay Bengal began to increase rapidly. The rapid growth of press, particularly the vernacular press accelerated the growth of peoples' consciousness. In the first half of the nineteenth century women issues were written in many periodicals by enlightened male personalities. But in the second half of the nineteenth century women began to start written about their own problems in many journals. One may perceive the dynamics of change in positions and strategies regarding certain issues like women's education, child marriage, widow remarriage, women's seclusion, 'reform', self-help, 'work for the country' etc. It is not too much to think that, the women, who wrote in the periodicals, having braved the censure of traditionalist to confess their identities in signed articles, also read what was written about them. This may well be a cause for the change in the dynamics of the local; history also records some changes that were effected here and spread across the country.¹⁹ Women also experienced increased opportunities for the expression of their individuality. Although women in earlier times were certainly not an undifferentiated group, we do not have sufficient records to go beyond generalizations about their lives. Formal education and particularly the development of publications intended for and written by women gave women a voice.²⁰

In the nineteenth century Bengal the most important fact of gender consciousness was the evils of child marriage. Perhaps the greatest obstacle to the growth of intimate conjugal love was child marriage which was the subject of frequent comment in contemporary journals. It was pointed out that, the age of the bride was not suitable for promoting the true ideal of relations between husband and wife. In many cases the husbands were such older than their wives. This resulted, apart from other

things, in a gulf of difference in their mental outlook. Contemporary writings testify to it.²¹

Pandit Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar strongly argued that child marriage could never lead to the conjugal love. We may count his article '*Balya Bibaher Dosh*' (the evils of child marriage), published in the very first issue of the *Sarbasubhakari Patrika* (August, 1850) as being the first manifestation of the changes outlook. This article in it pointing out the abuses caused by child marriage and pleading for its abolition. 'Oh God', it exclaimed, 'when will you save us from this woeful condition, and after how many years will that happy day come! However, it is good that there has been of late some agitation against it and good result will come out of it sooner or later.'²² This may be treated as the first step to focus the evils of child marriage. Before that, not much social consciousness regarding the evils of this practice was noticeable. Even if there was no organized protest movement, dissatisfaction against the practice was growing. Initially, it was confined to a socially conscious minority section. In the later period, a number of articles came to be written on the physical, social and other undesirable aspects of child marriage.

Being worried about the demerits of child marriage Bamasundari Debi once wrote that, the country would progress if the child marriage system was abolished. Our family and society were being humiliated regularly with the effects of child marriage system.²³ Later, one anonymous scholar Rasiklal Sen discussed the merits and demerits of child marriage system in detail in *Bharati Patrika* and commented that, the health and mind of both the husband and wife became sick and fatigue. Again the fullest development of the gland available in the physical and mental side are related. In fact, the beauty of health and mind were lost as a result of child marriage and given birth to immature baby.²⁴

Same remark was also passed by Kailasbasini Debi in respect of bad effects of child marriage system. She claimed that principal reason for the deplorable condition of women and society was early marriage. The husband-wife relationship, in her opinion, could never be based on perfect understanding if men and women were married so early. She added that, as a result of early marriage anything ranging from the husband being a debauchee to frequent quarrels between the husband and the wife might happen. Moreover, she argued, children born to teenage parents were bound to be short lived and of ill health, the health of the parents might also suffer, the mother might even die in childbirth, and since the young husband had to earn for a big family, he would become permanently poverty stricken. She further said that, early marriage was mainly responsible for child widowhood, because the mortality rate among children was very high. The wife's relationships with in-laws were far from satisfactory during those days. At the end, she claimed, the problem of child widowhood and polygamy could never be solved unless early marriage was abolished.²⁵ Many other women such as Jnanadanandini Debi, Krishnabhabini Debi, Sarada Debi, Nagendrabala Mustafi and Mankumari Basu attacked the customs of early marriage.

Satyendranath Tagore wrote sharply in the same way in *Bharati Patrika* that, child marriage was another insufferable

principle. Its poisonous effect was found not only in Bengal but also all over India. He ridiculed child marriage of boys and girls and compared this marriage with the marriage of male pigeon and female pigeon.²⁶

Not only in the magazines of nineteenth century run by the Hindus but also in many magazines of twentieth century specially run by the Muslims criticisms against the demerits of child marriage system were discussed. For example, in the Bhadra issue in 1324 (1917) of *Al Eslam* it was written that, the main obstruction for liberation and education for women was child marriage. It was harmful, disgraceful and the like not only for female child but also for male child. So, child marriage has got no positive side.²⁷ In the same way, several criticism and discussion against child marriage attracted our notice and highlighted the consciousness of people such as in *Moyajjin Patrika* (Srabon, 1335), *Masik Mohammadi Patrika* (Baishakh, 1335), *Islam Pracharak Patrika* (Srabon-Bhadra, 1310) and others.

4. Social Reform Movement in Colonial Bengal

Therefore, from the middle of the nineteenth century by the impact of western education and contemporary periodicals some individuals started thinking deeply about the evils of child marriage nay the nature of conjugal relations and a movement to combat the shocking effects of this widespread custom of Bengal.²⁸ Before that, in 1838 Young Bengal established the *Society for the Acquisition of General Knowledge*, where they discussed various aspects of western science and stood for a number of social reforms, such as the prohibition of caste taboos, child marriage, *Kulin* polygamy etc.²⁹ But it is true that, at first a strong protest against consummation of child marriage was made by Pandit Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar in his writings of *Sarvasubhakari Patrika* in 1850. In January 1856, when the Hindu Remarriage Bill was on the anvil, more than four hundred enlightened citizens of Bengal, with prominent personalities like Russick Krishna Mullick, Peary Chand Mitter, Radhanath Sikdar, Kishori Chand Mitter and Abhoy Charan Mullick as their leaders, presented a petition to the Government praying for 'a General Marriage Law for the Natives' of comprehensive nature.³⁰ But no Act for a general reform of the system of marriage was then passed except the Hindu Widow's Remarriage Act of 1856.

In this context, the primary aim of the reformers was to find and fix the standard of the true relationship between husband and wife. For example, child-marriage was condemned because it could not generate the sense of reciprocity and like-mindedness between husband and wife. In child-marriage the bride and the bridegroom were too young to affirm their consent, what mattered was the will of their parents. This was condemned in no uncertain terms: "What a terrible thing! Those who are going to enter into new life are themselves not aware of it. They do not know whether the relationship would do them good or harm in the future..... People marry as a matter of course and the only thing they know for generations past is that children are born of marriage."³¹

The biggest step concerned the indissoluble Hindu child marriage was taken in 1860. Before that, there was no legal

prohibition against a man having intercourse with a child wife, nor was there any legal minimum to the age of marriage. The Indian Penal Code of 1860 included for the first time, a definition of rape as the act of a husband who consummated his marriage before the wife was ten years old.³² In this connection it may be said that, this step took almost seventy years to raise the age to fourteen, and to fix a minimum age of marriage. Many historical accounts trace the journey from Section 375 of the IPC to the passing of the Sarda Act (Child Marriage Restraint Act) in 1929.

As a President of the Indian Reform Association, established on 2nd November 1870, Keshab Chandra Sen decided to refer the question of marriageable age to the eminent medical men of the country for their opinion and addressed a letter on this matter³³ on 1 April 1871 to Dr. Norman Chevers, Dr. J. Fayrer, Dr. J. Ewart, Dr. S. G. Chuckarbutty, Dr. D. B. Smith, Dr. T. E. Charles, Dr. Chunder Coomar Dey, Dr. Mahendra Lal Sircar, Babu Nobin Krishna Bose, Tumeez Khan Bahadur, Atmaram Pandurang and Dr. A. V. White. The opinions of the doctors on this point were from minimum age 14 to proper age 21. In this respect, Dr. Mahendra Lal Sircar observed in his note: 'Early marriage, in my humble opinion, is the greatest evil of our country. It has stood, so to say, at the very springs of the life of the nation, preventing the normal expanse of which it is capable.' He published a paper on the earliest marriageable age of Indian girls in the *Calcutta Journal of Medicine*, July 1871, strongly denouncing child marriage 'on true physiological grounds' and observed: 'We would deem it a misfortune to the country, if the agitation, inaugurated by Babu Keshab Chandra Sen, be allowed to subside without its producing the desired effect upon the mind of the community, if the note of warning unanimously given by the leading medical gentlemen of Calcutta be unheeded. We know the disastrous effect the custom has produced in the shape of deterioration of race and it will be culpable perversity on our part, if informed of the remedy we fail to apply it, through prejudice or pride.' However, after a long controversy, a Special Marriage Act was passed through Brahma efforts, setting the minimum marriageable age for non-Hindus at fourteen for girls and eighteen for boys as Act III of 1872.³⁴ This Act was fairly radical because it ruled out caste and religious barriers to marriage, prohibited polygamy and legalized divorce.

In 1873, a batch of young men, under the leadership of Nabakanta Chatterjee, formed a league or covenant to oppose child marriage and began to publish a monthly journal called *Mahapap Balya Bibaha* or 'The Great Sin of Child Marriage'.³⁵ In 1877 some young progressive Brahmos organised something like a secret league, one of their pledges being 'never to encourage marriage between young men below twenty-one and girls below sixteen'. More important was the debate fore-grounded the issue of infant marriage. A series of tragedies occurred in Bengal, including in 1890 the death of 10 year-old Phulmonee due to marital rape by her 35 year-old husband, Hari Mohan Maity.³⁶ In this respect, it may be mentioned that, Behramji M. Malabari, a Parsi reformer, formulated his *Notes on Infant Marriage and Enforced Widowhood*, both of which he rightly considered to be related social evils. He circulated these notes to important

Government officials and public men for their opinion in these matters. At first he did not want State interference for any legislation but sought its moral support.³⁷ Finally, regarding the child marriage, the age of consent for the consummation of marriage was raised ten to twelve by legislation on 19 March, 1891 as Act X of 1891.³⁸ It may be said that, the Age of Consent Act of 1891 was no doubt a piece of humane legislation meant to remove a glaring social abuse. But as census statistics show, child marriage continued to be a widely practiced social custom among all the castes, high and low alike.

Therefore, social conferences began to advocate the cause of post-puberty marriages during the nineties of the last century, but their efforts were not appreciably successful till the beginning of the twentieth century. In 1895, Shri Manmohan Ghose, as regards Bengal spoke in his Address at a meeting of the National Indian Association, the Right Hon'ble Lord Hobhouse presiding: 'As regards child-marriages, though I regret I cannot say that they have been discontinued, there has undoubtedly been remarkable progress of late years.'³⁹ In 1910 some Hindus in Bengal under the leadership of Raja Narendra Nath, editor of the *Indian Mirror*, formed a League, one object of which was to raise the marriage age of girls. The All-India Social Conference, which met at Calcutta on 31 December 1925 under the President ship of a distinguished Indian lady, Shrijukta Sarala Devi Chaudhurani, while 'recording with satisfaction the rise in the age of marriage', emphasized 'the need for further raising the age both for boys and girls in view of physical degeneration and other evils resulting from early marriage.'⁴⁰ The All-India Women Conference (AIWC), established in 1927 was of the firm opinion that it was ineffective to raise the age of consent without fixing the age of marriage.⁴¹

In fact, between 1922 and 1927, the Indian Legislative Assembly debated a number of Bills concerned with raising the age of consent, or the age at which intercourse was legally permissible. Because, the destructive effects of child marriages forced social reformers to get them prevented by enactment of law. However, in 1927, Rai Saheb Har Bilas Sarada introduced

the Hindu Child Marriage Bill which, he claimed, struck at the heart of the problem. In this context, an Age of Consent Committee was set up on behalf of the Indian legislature. The Bill was ultimately passed in 1929 as Child Marriage Restraint Act, fixing the minimum age of marriage 14 for girls and 18 for boys.⁴² So, the Bill was approved and finally the Sarada Act came into effect in 1930.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion we may say that, since the nineteenth century there had been opposition to child marriage and to the consummation of marriage of girls below the age of puberty. Moral issues, problems of health, birth control, mistreatment of women, all became associated with the issue of child marriage. The progressive realization of the usefulness of female education, gradual disruption of the joint family system, changing socio-economic conditions, particularly the hard necessities of the economic struggle for existence, have automatically contributed in raising the marriageable age of girls far beyond the expectations of legislators and reformers. Of course, enlightened leaders of public thought have helped considerably in this by their writings, speeches and other efforts. Another new feature in the social life of India nay Bengal in the twentieth century has been the contraction of inter-caste marriages. Most importantly, a growing consciousness on the part of Indian women of their political and social status has led for several years to a demand to revise and codify the laws governing the Hindu home, especially in relation to marriage, divorce, succession to property etc.

Acknowledgement

The author is indebted to Professor I. Sarkar, former professor, department of History, University of North Bengal. This paper would not have been possible to compile without the able guidance and active co-operation of professor I. Sarkar.

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33. The theme of the Keshab Chandra Sen's letter was; "I have the honour to solicit the favour of your opinions on a subject of great importance to the native community in India. There is no doubt that the custom of premature marriage, as it prevails in this country, is injurious to the moral, social and physical interests of the people, and is one of the main obstacles in the way of their advancement. Owing to the spread of education and enlightened ideas the evils arising from this institution are beginning to be perceived and there is a growing desire to remedy them. Those, however, who are alive to the importance of the reform, feel great difficulty in determining the marriageable age of native girls. It seems necessary, therefore, that competent medical authorities should be consulted in this matter, and their judgement made known for the guidance of the native community. I beg, therefore, respectfully to request you will be pleased, after a careful consideration of the facts that have come to your knowledge and of the climate and other influences which govern the physical development of woman in tropical countries, to state what you consider to be the age of puberty of native girls and their minimum marriageable age". See Datta. K. K., op. cit. pp. 314-315.
34. Datta. K. K., op. cit. p. 317; see also Borthwick. M., op. cit. pp. 124-126; Gupta. C., op. cit. p. 138.
35. Datta. K. K., Loc.cit.
36. Kosambi. M., (1991): 'Girl-Brides and Sociological Change: Age of Consent Bill (1891) Controversy', an article in *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 26, No. 31-32, pp. 1857-68; see also in detail Sarkar. T., op. cit. pp. 191-249; Basu. S., (Compiled and Edited), op.cit. pp. 211-212; Gupta. C., op. cit. p. 131; Zafar. M., (January-June, July-December, 2014): 'Social Reform in Colonial Bengal: Revisiting Vidyasagar', an article in *Philosophy and Progress*, Vols. LV-LVI, ISSN 1607-2278 (Print), p.116.
37. Behramji M. Malabari, born at Baroda in 1853. He came to Bombay at the age of fifteen where he received encouragement from the Head Master, Rev. William Dixon, in 1868 to appear at the entrance or Matriculation Examination. He wrote in one of his *Notes*: 'It is a pity that some of my friends are still harping upon "Government interference". I want no such thing. It is cooperation from the state, and not coercion, that society stands in need of. And I am glad to find that such cooperation will not be withheld if duly applied for'. *The Indian Magazine and Review* brought to public notice the discussions which Malabari had started on the question of early marriage and reform. On 11 June 1890, Malabari published an appeal on behalf of the Daughters of India. See in detail Datta. K. K., op. cit. pp. 318-332; also in Basu. S., (Compiled and Edited), op. cit. pp. 214-215.
38. Chakraborty. U., (1963): Condition of Bengali Women Around the 2nd Half of the 19th Century, Calcutta, p. 6; see also Majumdar. R. C., op. cit. p. 69; Datta. K. K., op.cit. p. 332; Sekhar Bandyopadhyay, op. cit. p. 149.
39. Datta.K. K., op. cit. p. 333.
40. Datta. K. K., op. cit. p. 336.
41. Basu. A. & Ray. B., (2003): Women's Struggle- A History of the All India Women's Conference 1927-2002, Manohar, New Delhi, p. 58.
42. Basu. A. & Ray. B., op. cit. pp. 55-56.

