CHAPTER - VIII

YOUNG BENGAL AND SOCIO-RELIGIOUS REFORM
1. Young Bengal Movement After Derozio:

Young Bengal movement went on after the death of Derozio. The meetings of the Academic Association were held every Saturday night at David Hare's school. In the Association Young Bengal discussed all sorts of moral, metaphysical, historical and political questions. Hare was the President of the Association. He was deeply interested in its prosperity. Little is, however, known of its proceedings. But the palmy days of the Association were over by August, 1838. In a letter to Gobind Chunder Bysack dated August 12, 1838, Ramgopal Ghose wrote:

The Academic Association is getting on very miserably and I should not be surprised, if one of these days it be systematically abolished. What a pity it is that the old and cherished institution of our school days be thus suffered to die through the indifference of the miscalled natives.

In another letter to Gobind Chunder Byasack dated March 31, 1839, Ramgopal wrote:

The last meeting of the A.A. (Academic Association) was held yesterday night, and we fortunately had a

1. The Englishman cited in the Calcutta Monthly Journal, No. XXXVII, 1837, p. 84.

discussion, which took place after three successive meetings had failed. The attendance was thin, and the speaking very ordinary. I have little hope of the revival of the palmy days of this Association. 3

It is likely that the Academic Association did not last long after March 31, 1839.

Meanwhile Young Bengal started an association named the Epistolary Association. According to Shivnath Shastri, it was founded in 1834. 4 A writer observed that the members of the Association exchanged opinion in the true Renaissance - humanist style. 5 We have, however, little or no knowledge of the proceedings of the Association. We can derive a very general idea about it from Ramgopal Ghose's letter to Gobind dated August 12, 1838. Ram Gopal wrote:

We formed an Epistolary Association, i.e. writing letters to each other and circulating them among the members. There is no limit to the nature of our subjects. Several good letters have already appeared, and the utmost freedom of discussion is allowed upon the merit of these epistoles. 6

3. Ibid, p. 177.
It is evident that Young Bengal exchanged letters among themselves with great freedom of thought with which they discussed and debated everything in the Academic Association in Derozio's time.

But the Epistolary Association was short-lived. The reason is not far to seek. In the above letter to Gobind on August 12, 1838, Ramgopal wrote: "They are very idle and apathetic and I do not know if they will mean." In another letter to Gobind dated January 14, 1839 Ramgopal wrote that the Epistolary Association might be revived, if a few of their friends would exert themselves. It also appears from the above letter of Ramgopal that worldly occupations claimed their time and inevitably distracted their attention.

Three things are worth noting. Firstly, the Academic Association and the Epistolary Association declined in 1838 or in 1839. Secondly, the decline suggests that Young Bengal's flush of enthusiasm for Derozio's ideal of social change along rational and liberal line waned. Thirdly, the rational or liberal spirit of Young Bengal's socio-religious stance did not die down before 1838. This impression might be

7. Sanyal, Ramgopal, op. cit., p. 176.
9. Ramgopal Ghose wrote: 'When I have more leisure on hand, I shall see what can be done. At present I am very busy, having just taken up business of another Liverpool House that was offered'. Sanyal, Ramgopal, op. cit., p. 176.
strengthened by an account in a contemporary periodical of 1837: 'they thought that the best and surest way of making the people abandon the barbarous customs and rites was by diffusing education among them.'

A. Polygamy:

In fact, they raised their voice against superstitious customs and practices of the day. In January, 1832, a few days after the death of Derozio, Krishna Mohun Banerjee wrote an article on polygamy. In a mood of adolescent indignation against Hindu superstitions particularly after his expulsion from his house, and perhaps under the influence of Alexander Duff with whom he was in close contact, he attacked Hinduism as a false and absurd religion. He then proceeded to observe that whether the pernicious customs like polygamy were enjoined by Hinduism or not it was contrary to the principle of morality and reason. In his opinion it encouraged what morality would positively check — buying and selling of matrimonial union. It was the duty of everyone, who undertook the education of the natives, to root out from their mind prejudices in favour of it. The custom of polygamy was a striking illustration of the principle of inequality in the Hindu society, because a Kulin Brahmin was permitted to marry as many times as he wished but a woman was denied such liberty and

11. The Enquirer reprinted in the India Gazette, January 14, 1832.
even condemned to widowhood in the case of death of her husband. Besides, it was a practice of giving females in marriage to Kulin Brahmins without the reference to the latter's age or circumstance, and it condemned women to misery and degradation. He concluded that the encouragement afforded to polygamy must be checked by every rational being. 12

He was not content with the Reformer's suggestion for an enactment against polygamy. He believed that it could be prevented but not eradicated by physical means, and what was necessary for its eradication was the spread of education and the growth of an enlightened public opinion. 13 It may be recollected in this connection that Rammohun Roy in course of his conversation with Bentinck before the enactment of an anti-Sati Regulation 14 stressed the growth of an enlightened opinion among the natives for the abolition of the horrid rite of Sati.

In 1836 the Jnananveshan sought to create opinion among its readers against polygamy. It drew up a list of Kulin polygamists in the style of Vidyasagar. The list included twenty four polygamists along with a number of marriages cited against their names. 14

12. Ibid.
13. Ibid.
B. Female Education and widow-remarriage:

Young Bengal was a staunch champion of female education. In 1832 the Jnananveshan quoted a plea of the John Bull for the education of the native girls as a means of opening the eyes of their understanding and saving them from wretched degradation - a plea made in connection with the establishment of a school by Mr. Macpherson for education of the native girls.\(^{15}\)

In January, 1833 the Jnananveshan sought to expose the hollowness of the traditional interdict upon the study of the Hindu Shastras by the women and the Sudras. It contended that such prohibition was not enjoined by the Vedas. Moreover, it did not stand the test of reason, because all men are created alike and should have equal right to the acquisition of knowledge. It was based on the invidious distinction between the males and the females or between the Brahmins and the Sudras.\(^{16}\)

In 1837 it circulated with pleasure a news that a few wealthy natives like Mutty Lal Seal and Halodhar Mallick had decided to form an association, the object of which was to promote education of the higher order of the people of this

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country and to remove superstitions regarding widow-remarriage. In this connection the Paper remarked that posterity would have cause to be thankful to them if they he happy instruments of civilizing and bettering the condition of the gentle and essential half of our society. It ended on an optimistic note that men like Mutty Lal and Hallodhar would not be deterred in their mission by any threat of the Dharma Sabha, which was leading the people towards error and irrational state.  

A reader of the Jnananveshan wrote to the editor in October, 1837 that it was a glaring instance of inequality that men were permitted to marry as many times as they desired, while women were not allowed to remarry after the death of their husbands. The reader appealed to the editor of the Paper to make some agitation in favour of widow-remarriage and declared his intention to come forward to protest against the objections that might be raised by the editor of the Samachar Chundrika.  

In a reply to the above reader what the editor of the Jnananveshan wrote was virtually an appeal to the educated 

persons to disregard the objections against widow-remarriage and thereby to throw off the fetters of the slavery of women to men perpetuated by the prevailing marriage system. The editor upheld the equal rights of women with men in all respects and firmly pleaded for the education of women as a means of the enfranchisement of their mind and emancipation of them from the virtual slavery and degradation to which they were subject. 19

C. Sati:

Young Bengal strongly supported the Regulation against Sati which Derozio welcomed in his poem 'On The Abolition Of Sattee'. In 1832 Krishna Mohun Banerjea strongly criticised Mr. Bathie, an Englishman, who joined the members of the Dharma Sabha in getting the Act repealed and restoring the horrid practice. 20 The Jnananveshan thanked the Government for the rejection of the petition of the Dharma Sabha against the Regulation. 21 It advised the editor of the Samachar Chundiika not to plunge into rebellious proceedings for the rejection of their petition against anti-Sati Regulation. 22

20. The Enquirer quoted in the India Gazette, April 14, 1832.
The Jnananveshan published in brief a report of the meeting of the Brahma Sabha held on November 10, 1832 in order to congratulate the king-in-council for the confirmation of the Regulation against Sati and the rejection of the appeal of the orthodox Hindus headed by the Dharma Sabha against the Regulation. It is noteworthy that about three or four hundred respectable persons attended the meeting. Chunder Shaikhur Deb and Krishna Mohun Banerjea were among them. Chunder Shaikhur expressed thanks to Rammohun for the unwearied labour he had devoted to the matter of the abolition of Sati. Krishna Mohun spoke at great length on the topic, and "on the zealous endeavours of Rammohun for the abolition of evil practices and customs of the country." Krishna Mohun, once a critic of Rammohun as a "half liberal", admired Rammohun's role in social reforms.

On the issue of the anti-Sati Regulation Young Bengal stood by the Brahmas against the Dharma Sabha. The Jnananveshan wrote an article in refutation of some of the false statements published in the Samachar Chundrika against the proceedings of the meeting of the Brahma Sabha held on July 13, 1832 in support of the regulation against Sati.


Jnananveshan gleefully quoted the John Bull which flashed a news that Bhagabati Charan Mitra, a member of the Dharma Sabha, gave his daughter in marriage to the bridegroom, who belonged to the party of Sati-haters - a news which had been treated as a step to "ruptures in the Dharma Sabha." The Jnananveshan criticised the Dharma Sabha, because the Sabha maintained no intercourse with the supporters of the abolition of Sati, even with their associates. In this connection it wrote that there were various instances in which the fundamental laws of the Sabha had been violated by the leading members and that it was evidently on the decline.

The Jnananveshan did not have any resort to personal attacks upon some members of the Dharma Sabha which had been launched by some like Krishna Mohun earlier. Its criticism showed somewhat of maturity and tactfulness. It contended that some rich members of the Sabha did not live up to its


rules in practice. Moreover, a number of members resorted to immoral acts under the garb of religiousness, namely visiting the prostitutes, drinking wine, seducing wives of others, taking recourse to falsehood etc. 28

The Paper contended that many "Dolopoties" were outwardly pious but secretly involved in illicit intercourse with women. This was a glaring instance of hypocrisy of many social and religious leaders. 29 It also wrote articles exposing the hypocrisy of religious saints. 30

E. Idolatry:

The Jnananveshan expressed its disapproval of idolatrous worship. 31 It jubilantly brought to public notice


29. The Jnananveshan quoted in the Samachar Durpan, April 14, 1832, Moitra, Suresh Chandra (ed), Selections From Jnanannesan (Bengali version), pp. 1 - 3.

30. To cite, for example, articles, 'The Imposter Of The Bhookylas" & "The Hypocrisy Of The False Devotee Discovered", in the Jnananveshan cited in the John Bull September 17 and November 12, 1832, Moitra, Suresh Chandra (ed), Selections From Jnanannesan (English Version), pp. 35 - 37.

31. The Jnananveshan, quoted in the Samachar Durpan, October 19, 1833, Moitra, Suresh Chandra (ed), Selections From Jnanannesan (Bengali version), p. 20.
the publication of a Bengali work against idolatry under the
direction of Anodha Prasad Banerjea of Tellenipara. It held
that liberal English education could not be keeping with
idolatrous faith and that the spread of such learning would
lead to the gradual abolition of such belief in course of
time. In an issue it wrote: An Indian boy, who had received
education "can no more believe in "Kalee" than we can our-
selves." In another issue it wrote: "May it not be that
because we are ignorant we believe in a plurality of Gods etc.
and that as the light of knowledge will be gradually diffused
among us, we will reject these ideas and embrace a better
system of philosophy, morality and religion." It thus
reiterated the view of Krishna Mohun Banerjea (as expressed
in the Enquirer of 1831) that education would automatically
lead to the subversion of belief in idolatry.

32. The Jnananveshan cited in the Calcutta Courrier, February,
27, 1840, quoted in Moitra, Suresh Chandra (ed),
33. The Jnananveshan quoted in the John Bull, June 14, 1837
Moitra, Suresh Chandra (ed), Selections From Jnanannesan
(English Version), p. 93.
34. The Jnannanveshan cited in the Bengal Hurkarau, September 11,
1833, Moitra, Suresh Chandra (ed), Selections From Jnanannesan
(English Version), p. 75.
The paper, however, concentrated its attack upon certain practices during the Pujahs or religious occasions. It disapproved of the "Nautches" held during Durga Pujah. Its contention was that "Nautches" and other accompaniments were no part of their religion. Moreover, money misspent in unworthy enterprises like the "Nautches" might be spent in worthy pursuits like the promotion of education, or improvement of trade, manufacture, agriculture and condition of the country. The Paper also wrote. "If they (native gentlemen) must celebrate the occasion why not have some more rational amusement of which all ranks might freely partake instead of the present degrading and immoral tone of dances performed by women of the most abandoned character." This was an attack upon the Babu culture. In those days the wealthy families or 'novo riche' expended money in "Nautches" during the Durga Puja. In fact, the Paper in an article on the Dharma Sabha pointed out that many of its rich members entertained the English "Sahibs" by arranging "Nautches" on

35. The Jnananveshan cited in the India Gazette, October 17, 1833, Moitra, Suresn Chandra (ed), Selections From Jnanannesan (English version), pp. 77-78; Also the Jnananveshan quoted in the Samachar Durpan, October 19, 1833, (Kartick 4, 1240 B.S.), Bandopadhyay, B.N. (ed), Sambad Patre Sekaler Katha, Vol. II, pp. 286-287.

36. The Jnananveshan quoted in the Calcutta Courier, October 23, 1839, Moitra, Suresh Chandra (ed), Selections From Jnanannesan (English Version), p. 120; Also the Jnananveshan cited in the Samachar Durpan, October 26, 1839 (Kartick 10, 1246 B.S.), Moitra, Suresh Chandra (ed), Selections From Jnanannesan (Bengali Version), p. 84.
the occasion of the Durga Puja. But the Paper did not make an all-out attack upon the Babu culture. It wrote that money spent in "Nautches" could be utilized in the charitable manner in which Dwarakanath Tagore distributed money among the natives on the occasion of the "Shradh" of his mother. It may be noted that the beneficiaries on the occasion were a number of mendicants, both laymen and priests. The Brahmins received each eight annas, and the other class half that sum. Dwarkanath's munificence on the occasion meant the satisfaction of the priests among others, which was virtually not condemned by the Jnananveshan. Later in 1840 an article of the Paper on the feeding of the Brahmins without any critical comment might suggest the coldness of their early reaction against the priestly impositions.


38. The Jnananveshan quoted in the India Gazette, October 17, 1833, Moitra, Suresh Chandra (ed), Selections From Jnanannesan (English Version), pp. 77 - 78.


In connection with the "Shama" Puja the Paper wrote:

"All that the Hindu religion enjoins is, that its votaries shall observe a religious illumination. It nowhere tells that they should run about the streets and burn the clothes and bodies of other people." It solicited intervention of the Government in putting down the cruel practice.41

A writer in the Jnananveshan of 183342 did not however welcome legislative enactment for putting down cruel practices during the Charak Puja, which was desired by the editors of the Reformer, the India Gazette and the Bengal Hurkarau.43 The writer considered it an interference with religious beliefs of the Hindus and expressed satisfaction at the gradual abolition of superstitious practices.

It is noteworthy that the Jnananveshan invoked the intervention of legislation in the suppression of cruel practices during the Shama Puja. But a writer did not solicit such intervention in the Charak Puja.


42. The Jnananveshan quoted in the Reformer April 7 & 21, 1833.

43. The India Gazette, April 11, 1833; The Reformer quoted in the India Gazette, March 29, 1833; The Bengal Hurkarau cited in the India Gazette, March 28 & 30, 1833.
However, the Jnananveshan exposed unreasonable practices during the "Nil" Puja in a ludicrous manner.\(^{44}\) Again the Paper sought to arouse public opinion against the sacrifice of human beings before the goddess of Rakhini in Burdwan.\(^{45}\) Again, it did not challenge the custom of the burning of the dead bodies on the bank of the Ganges for bliss in the future world. But it questioned the propriety of carrying off a sick person to the bank of the Ganges - a practice which was responsible for premature death of the sick person.\(^{46}\) In fine, it is noteworthy that in 1837 the Government in obedience to the instruction of the Court of Directors wanted to withdraw taxes upon the visitors of the temple of Jagannath. In this connection the Jnananveshan urged the Government to allocate money for the maintenance of the religious functions of the Jagannath temple of Puri and to permit the continuance of taxes levied upon the visitors.

\(^{44}\) The Jnananveshan quoted in the Samachar Durpan, April, 27, 1833 (Baisakh 16, 1240 B.S.), Bandopadhyay, B.N. (ed), Sambad Patri Sekaler Katha, Vol. II, pp. 516-517.

\(^{45}\) The Jnananveshan cited in the Samachar Durpan, February, 4, 1837 (Magha 23, 1243 B.S.), Moitra, Suresh Chandra (ed), Selections From Jnananveshan (Bengali version), pp. 42-43.

\(^{46}\) The Jnananveshan quoted in the John Bull, May 1, 1832, Moitra, Suresh Chandra (ed), Selections From Jnananveshan (English version), pp. 34 - 35.
of the temple of Jagannath in Gaya and Prayag. It wishes that a portion of money arising out of the taxes in Gaya and Prayag might be given to the "Pandas" (or priests in charge of religious function), while a portion be handed over to the Education Committee for the establishment of English schools in Puri or Calcutta.47

Thus the Enquirer and the Jnananveshan, which were the organs of the so-called "radical" members of Young Bengal, held up liberal and rational ideas instilled into their mind by Derozio. The tone of the papers was against irrational customs and practices like polygamy and Sati. Idolatry came under fire of the Jnananveshan. Female education and widow-remarriage were advocated by the Paper. But one may say that a contradiction in the stance of the paper on idolatry was discernible when it focussed its attack upon certain practices during the pujhas or idolatrous ceremonies. Young Bengal might not be said to be at daggers drawn towards the Brahmins or priests as before. They were critical of the members of the Dharma Sabha. But their criticism was somewhat tactical. It is noteworthy that they upheld the Regulation against Sati and drew closer to Rammohun Roy or the Brahmas whom some members of Young Bengal

criticised severely. One can say that they lost their early violent and aggressive temper at least in some degree. There were many causes for this retreat. They lost their leader, Derozio. In the prosecution of their liberal views they faced hostility from their parents or guardians or family members, the Dharma Sabha and influential members of the society, the Moderates led by Rammohun’s followers and a number of English educated youths. They suffered isolation from the Hindu Society for a time. By the 40s of the 19th century most members of Young Bengal got established in the society. They came out of their isolation and became compromising in a way or another.

II. Young Bengal and The Society For The Acquisition Of General Knowledge And Its Aftermath.

In fact, in 1838 Young Bengal took the prime initiative in the foundation of the Society for the Acquisition (hereafter SAGK) of General Knowledge in cooperation with a large number of intellectuals. Tarachand Chuckerburtee was the President of the Society. Ramgopal Ghose and Kalachand Set were the Vice-Presidents of the Society and Krishna Mohun Banerjee, Rasik Lal Sen, Madhob Chunder Mullick, Peary Mohan Bose, Tarinee Charan Banerjea, and Raj Krishna Dey the members of the Committee of the Society, while Raj Krishna Mitra
was the treasurer.\textsuperscript{48} The prospectus of the Society, signed by Tarinee, Ramgopal, Ramtanoo, Tarachand and Raj Krishna on February 20, 1838, regretted the want of an institution where the educated Hindus might meet together on an extensive scale for the purpose of mutual improvement and receive an impetus for applying themselves to useful studies. It emphasized the unity of intellectuals in such a laudable pursuit by which the bonds of fellowship might be strengthened, the acquisition of knowledge promoted and the sphere of usefulness extended. It proposed that a society named the Society for the Acquisition of General Knowledge be formed for the purpose of promoting a respectable knowledge on matters of general and more especially of local interest through written discourse or verbal discussion, and mutual good feeling, union and improvement among the educated Hindus.\textsuperscript{49} The second bye-law

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\item \textsuperscript{49} Chattopadhyay, Gautam (ed), \textit{Awakening In Bengal In Early Nineteenth Century}, Vol. I, Preface, pp. Lvi-Lviii.
\end{itemize}
of the Society provided that religious discussions of all kinds were to be excluded from the discourses\textsuperscript{50} obviously with an eye to greater unity of the intellectuals and not the secular ideal. The membership list that was available for the years 1840, 1842 and 1843\textsuperscript{51} shows that its social composition was broad-based. It was an affair of the Hindu College students, old and new, along with a few pupils of the newly founded Medical College and liberals of the older generation. It accommodated different shades of opinion under its banner, though staunch conservatives might keep out of it. It included Derozio's followers, Rammohun's disciples like Debendranath Tagore, Young Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar and Akshay Kumar Dutt and some like Uday Chandra Addhya, who were relatively conservative so far as Addhya's stance on the Dharma Sabha was concerned.\textsuperscript{52} Though the bulk of the members lived in Calcutta, there were quite a few members from the mofussils - not only from nearby

\textsuperscript{50} Ibid, p. Lix.

\textsuperscript{51} Ibid, pp. Lxi-Lx\textsuperscript{ii}(List of Members).

Howrah, Hugli etc. but also from far off Dacca and Mymensingh. The Society represented different walks of people - professionals, landed gentry and the business community, and different castes. In so great a venture certain tendencies operating detrimentally to the general object of unity and improvement might be there — tendencies which met with serious disapproval of Ramgopal Ghose. As Ramgopal wrote in his letter to Gobind Chunder Bysack dated May 17, 1838:

Many important points were overlooked at this general meeting owing to the want of previous arrangement .... The few did all themselves without endeavouring to get all classes to take an active part in the matter. The result of this has been ... that a disaffection towards several is general amongst the members of the society. This, however, I hope and trust, will be healed up before long.

53. Chattopadhyay, Gautam, op. cit., Introduction, p. XL.
56. The meeting here referred to was the meeting held at the Sanskrit College Hall on March 12, 1838 for the purpose of establishing the Society for the Acquisition Of General Knowledge. About three hundred young men were assembled at the meeting, Sanyal Ramgopal, op. cit., p. 170; Also Chattopadhyay, Gautam, op. cit., Preface, p. Lvii.
In the above letter Ramgopal wrote that two or three members of the Committee of the Society had been seriously offended with him as he had spoken rather warmly and perhaps harshly about the mismanagement of affairs. He expressed his readiness to resign from the post of Vice-President in the interest of the Society. The letter shows how sincerely Ramgopal desired unity of the intellectuals at large in abandonment of their early intolerance or hostility towards other intellectuals not sharing their views.

In the Society Mohesh Chunder Deb, who was a pupil of the Hindu College but not a follower of Derozio, read a paper entitled "A Sketch Of The Condition Of The Hindoo women" (January, 1839). He ascribed the degradation of Hindu women to the injunctions of Hinduism, thereby revealing a tendency, which might remind one of the aggressive heterodoxy of a number of Derozio's students or of a number of Hindu College students in his life-time. Mohesh, of course, balanced his criticism of Hindu shastras by blaming the tyrannical rule of the Muslims for the deplorable state of Hindu women, particularly for the custom of seclusion of women.

58. Sanyal, Ramgopal, loc. cit., p. 171.
60. Ibid., p. 96.
Mahesh's criticism of Hinduism and the Muslim rule might be subjected to discussion and debate. But he condemned the traditional customs like early marriage, polygamy and restrictions upon widow-remarriage on rational and liberal considerations.\textsuperscript{61} He hinted at the indifference of the educated youths to orthodoxy at home in the following words: "I need only refer them to what passes under their eyes every day and hour of their existence within the precincts of their own respective domiciles."\textsuperscript{62} One may be tempted to think that Mahesh, though not a follower of Derozio, carried his rationalist ideal. What is noteworthy is the retreat of the disciples of Derozio like Krishna Mohun Banerjea not only from their early aggressive attitude towards Hindu religion but also from Derozio's ideal of uncompromising opposition to Hindu superstitions. Krishna Mohun, once known as a "radical" and next a converted Christian, urged the audience of the SAGK not to discard everything that was ancient but to acknowledge the improvements made by our predecessors and to remove corruptions and "all rubbish that a sound superstructure may have room for its foundation and be raised to the prosperity of nations and individuals."\textsuperscript{63} Despite his

\textsuperscript{61} Ibid, pp. 101-104.
\textsuperscript{62} Ibid, p. 90.
\textsuperscript{63} Banerjea, Rev. Krishna Mohun, "Reform, Civil And Social", Chattopadhyay, Gautam, \textit{Awakening In Bengal In Early Nineteenth Century, Vol. I}, pp. 184 - 185.
exhortation to the audience to bring their rational consideration and freedom of thought and Judgement to bear upon the customs and tradition of the country, he urged them to follow the reformist line of Rammohun whom he once regarded as a 'half-liberal'. He held:

Your course becomes still easier when you consider that in the prosecution of your views as respects civil and social reform, you shall not be necessarily called upon to transgress the dectates of the Shasters and as your combat will principally be against customs and practices which corruptions of time have invented, you shall be unassailable even upon the enemies' own ground.

This may seem to be an echo of Rammohun's voice. Like Rammohun, Krishna Mohun meant to say that his crusade was against the customs and practices which had no countenance in the principal Shastras and were later growths through corruptions of the ages or through cunning human device.

A. Caste:

Correspondingly, Krishna Mohun's view of caste marked a retreat from earlier one. In 1831 he viewed caste as an unnatural distinction. In the SAGK he declared: "We...detest theory of respecting persons, not for talent but for birth."

64. Ibid, pp. 187-188.
65. Ibid, pp. 196-197.
Yet he threw the shaft of his attack not against the original quadruple divisions of caste but against the multiple distinctions which, he believed, had arisen in later times and had no countenance in the Shastras - the Vedas and the Puranas. 67

In his essay entitled "The Kulin Brahmins Of Bengal" in 1844 68 he, in justification of the four-fold division of caste, held the view that society was bound to be unequal - a view expressed by Edmund Burke of England long ago. In Krishna Mohun's words: "Disparities of rank and station are inseparable from human society, and the Hindu legislators in causing this quadruple division acted upon the principle that was observed by statesmen all over the world." 69 He, like Rammohun, wished for the flexibility of caste rules. He also stood for social mobility and breakdown of occupational caste ascriptions. He observed that 'the religious division into castes had, by detaching tribe from tribe and forcing important professions upon unwilling and perhaps unsuitable individuals, proved the real cause of India's misery and external humiliation'. 70

70. Ibid, p. 3.
B. Polygamy

Krishna Mohun Banerjea was as before an advocate of the abolition of polygamy. But earlier in the Enquirer of 1833 he at times attributed polygamy to injunctions of Hinduism. In the SAGK period or later he wrote that the institutions of Hinduism did not enjoy polygamy as "an indispensable act" or as a "positive duty". This was a changed view in consonance with his changed stance on socio-religious issue closely in Rammohun's method of reinterpretation of Hindu religion, though he, like Rammohun, did not refer to Manu or Yajnavalkya's sayings on it. It is significant that Krishna Mohun in his above essay, "The Kulin Brahmins Of Bengal", "contended that the prohibition of it through an enactment "cannot amount to an interference with the Brahmanical religion". He urged the necessity for an enactment, 'defining polygamy and even bigamy to be a punishable crime with the object of saving Hindu daughters from the misery and wretchedness of sharing only a portion of husband's affections for humanity's sake.'

It is interesting to note that Krishna Mohun was cautious in his approach and did not stand for the abolition of the Kulin order which proved to be the spring of polygamy.

73. Ibid, pp. 30 - 31.
He said: "we do not wish the Kulins to be pursued with fire and sword like the knight-templers of the old days." 74

C. Female Education:

Krishna Mohun was as before an advocate of female education. In the *SAGK* he talked tall of female education, female emancipation and national improvement. 75 But he did not advocate the school system of education for the grown-up Hindu girls, though the Christian Missionaries had already started schools for the education of Hindu women. 76 In his interview with a missionary gentleman in 1840 77 and in "A Prize Essay on Native Female Education" in 1841 he contended that among formidable obstacles to school education of grown-up Hindu girls were the custom of early marriage and seclusion and caste prejudice of the Hindus. It was in conformity with Hindu prejudices that he suggested the zenna or domestic system of instruction as conceived of by Gour Mohan Vidyalankar in his *Strisiksha Vidhyayak* (1822) or by Radha Kanta Deb. 78

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Krishna Mohun suggested the instruction of Hindu women of respectable class by European ladies in the inner apartment of the house.  

He pointed out that the scheme of instruction of wives by their husbands was not prove practicable due to a woman's railing at such an idea of education. But the case of a European lady instructing Hindu ladies with the permission of the master of the house would, he believed, be different since the respect which such a lady would command "must protect the learner from the scoff of her friends atleast for several hours in the day."  

He, therefore, proposed the formation of a European-native society for the recruitment of European tutorress of age and experience. He hoped that the European community, which was drawing "much of gold and silver" from the country and exercising lordly supremacy over it, ought not to grudge to bear the expenses of education of its sons and daughters. He saw the necessity of memoralizing the Government to patronise the above scheme of a society. He appealed to the natives, particularly the respectable and higher classes, to support it.

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He hoped that the English-educated youths, imbued with liberal ideas, would come forward in support of it. He was optimistic that the connection of the higher or influential classes with it would serve as a stimulus to the popularization of it among the countrymen in general and even prepare the atmosphere in which the middle classes might gradually wax bold and venture to send their girls to school.

It is to be noted that Krishna Mohun desired the establishment of infant schools in different parts of the country for the instruction of both male and female children. But in conformity with the custom of seclusion and early marriage he did not consider the school education of grown-up women. In those days Hindu girls were usually given in marriage when they were only nine or ten or before they had attained the age of puberty. As such Hindu girls of 9 or 10 years were not allowed to appear in public. In conformity with the traditional Hindu custom Krishna Mohun suggested the zenna or domestic system of instruction of the so-called grown-up girls.

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84. Bagal, Jogesh Chandra, op. cit., Appendix, p. 98.
85. Banerjea, K.M. A Prize Essay on Native Female Education, p. 139.
86. Ibid, pp. 97, 98.
Of course, Krishna Mohun contended that the aggregate body of the Hindus did not find any tangible advantage to be derived from the public education of girls in violation of the custom of seclusion. Moreover, the great portion of the country-men could ill-dispense with the service of their females or wives to afford them leisure for study and were forced by extreme penury to impose upon them the labourous task of the whole domestic drudgery. He, therefore, suggested the improvement of the temporal condition of the natives for the successful experiment of female education. 87

But he felt that the improvement of not only temporal but also spiritual condition of the natives was necessary for the success of any experiment whatsoever. He held that neither the way recommended of sending female teachers into the zenana, nor any other that was imaginable, could work vigorously before "the monstrous institutions of Brahminism are subverted by the sacred fabric of divine truth and before the secular affairs of our countrymen prosper." 88 He added that the authority of Manu and Vyas must be superseded by the higher sanctions of holy inspiration before a complete or even an

87. Ibid, pp. 99 - 100, 143 - 146.
88. Ibid, p. 141.
extensive emancipation of the sex could be expected in India. He concluded that prior to the conversion of the natives and amelioration of their temporal condition much could not be looked for in the way of female education. Even a system of the cultivation of letters among the Hindu females "can never be introduced before the dissemination of the Gospel and the elevation of the natives in point of honour and emolumen. In fact, he could not rise above the missionary influence.

He lacked a deep and abiding faith in reinterpreting Hindu religion and tradition which he held up before the audience of the SAGK. He attributed the degradation of Hindu women largely to the Hindu shastras and tradition. After entering into ceremonies observed after the birth of a male and a female child, he concluded that there must be "a marked and invidious distinction between the male and female children." He next adverted to the absence of institutions

89. Ibid.
90. Ibid, p. 147.
91. Ibid.
obligatory on parents to educate their daughters and prohibition upon women from reading the Vedas. It was also argued that the total seclusion of women was originally the Hindu practice. He held that the practice of immuring the females and disposing of them in early marriage must baffle every attempt at conferring public education upon them.

Peary Chand Mitra in countering the attack of Krishna Mohun or the Missionaries upon Hindu religion and tradition struck up at times positively a revivalist note in the SAGK. Peary Chand contended that the Hindu tradition allowed no such distinction between a male and a female child as pointed out by Krishna Mohun. Further, inspite of the want of express injunctions in the Shastras regarding the education of women there were many examples of learned females in ancient India. Moreover, the proficiency of several of the female literati in the Vedas was a proof of the unfair prohibition upon females regarding the sacred book having been weak in operation. Besides, Vyas composed the Bharut for the purpose of placing religious knowledge within the reach of women,

Sudras and other mixed castes. 96 Peary Chand argued that seclusion was originally the Muslim practice and started with Muslim invasion and rule. 97 He also pointed out that the "Gundharba" kind of marriage gave freedom of choice to both male and female in the selection of their partners, while the "Swayambara" offered liberty to the females in marriage, despite the wide powers being given to the parents in the selection of bride and bridegroom in marriages. 98 He further pointed out that the injunctions of Manu and Yagnavalkya enjoined several restrictions upon polygamy. 99 These were among his pleas to vindicate Hindu tradition regarding the position of women in reply to the missionary or the western attack upon it. Even he claimed supremacy of Hindu over ancient Greek or Roman tradition or over English tradition in some respects, particularly in matters relating to the higher status of women. 100

In his glorification of Hindu tradition Peary Chand, however, sought to rationalise the custom of early marriage with reference to the hot climate of the country. 101 In his revivalist zeal he thus showed signs of backslidings, which put a brake upon his career as a full-fledged reformer.

96. Ibid, pp. 276 - 280.
98. Ibid, pp. 281 - 283.
100. Ibid, pp. 294 - 297.
Thus Krishna Mohun's reformist and proselytizing spirit and Peary Chand's reviverist mood in the SAGK period were far off from Derozio's rational ideal.

D. The Bengal Spectator: Widow-Remarriage:

The Bengal Spectator (May, 1842 - November, 1843), which was an organ of Young Bengal, was, as noted before, managed by Ramgopal Ghose with the help of Peary Chand Mitra and some of his friends. There appeared an article on the Dharma Sabha in the Paper, which was reminiscent of the opposition of the conservative Hindus to the spirit of liberalism and rationalism of Derozio and his students. Criticizing the Dharma Sabha, it pointed out the contradiction of many of its members, who in violation of the principle of the Sabha took food and drink at home prohibited by the Hindu Shastras. Referring to the case of expulsion of Madhusudhan Mitra from the Sabha and readmission of him into it again by Ashutosh Deb, it contended how inhuman acts on trival and meaningless grounds proving injurious to peace and happiness of Hindu

102. The Bengal Spectator, September 1, 1842 (No. 2).
103. Ibid.
104. Madhusudhan Mitra was excommunicated from the Dharma Sabha on the ground that his second son, Shyama Charan Mitra, married the daughter of Bhairab Chandra Sarkar of Shyambazar for the second time without his (father's) knowledge. Madhusudhan was readmitted into the Sabha when his son parted with his wife at his instance - Ibid.
families were perpetuated in the name of religion merely for
the sake of maintaining the supremacy of "Polopoties". 105

With reference to the letters between Babu Kanai Lal
Thakur and Raja Yadav Krishna Bahadur published in the
Englishman (letters which reported that some members of the
family of the Raja had dined with some Tagore Babus) the
Paper wrote that the rigidity of the Dharma Sabha regarding
restrictions upon intercaste dining and upon dining of men of
similar castes was becoming ludicrous. It struck up an
optimistic note that the spread of education was gradually
to lead to the dispersion of prejudices for caste among the
Hindus. 106

There appeared two letters in the Paper in favour of
widow-remarriage. In 1842 a writer contended that the
interdict of some Hindu shastras upon the remarriage of
widows was contrary to reason, because males were allowed
to remarry after the death of wives but females were not
do permitted to do so after the death of their husbands. More-
over, widow-remarriage, though prohibited by the Smriti
Shastras, was referred to by many Hindu sages like Narad,
Sankyalikhit, Yagnavalkya and Harit or by the Mahanirban
Tantra. Besides, widow-remarriage was in vogue among the
Sudras and lower castes in some parts of the country. In

105. Ibid.
106. Ibid, November 1, 1842 (no. 11).
conclusion the writer suggested the formation of a society consisting mostly of respectable men and learned pundits—a society which, after a careful consideration of the rights and duties of the issues of the remarried widows, the texts of Hindu Shastras regarding remarriage and dictates of reason and justice, would pray to the Government for a legislative enactment in favour of widow-remarriage.107

The Paper in its editorial column reinterpreted Hindu religion and tradition in favour of widow-remarriage. It pointed out that widow-remarriage obtained in ancient times, and was still prevalent among the lower orders of our country-men in some parts of India. It wrote that in 1765 Raja Rajbullab Roy Bahadur of Dacca secured the unanimous verdict of the learned Pandits of Dravira, Telinga, Benaras and Mithila in favour of the marriage of his daughter, who became a widow. It further mentioned that Devala went so far as to enact that if the absent husband of a woman having no child did not return within a limited period, she was at liberty to marry again.108 It thus anticipated Vidyasagar in his attempt to secure verdict of Hindu Shastras for widow-remarriage.

But it was opposed to an enactment for the cause which its correspondent writer and later Vidyasagar stood for. It

107. Ibid, April, 1842 (No. 1), pp. 7-10.
argued that the intervention of the Government in the matter would lead to the establishment of a precedent, which might be dangerous for the cause of religious liberty - an object, which ought to be tolerated by every enlightened Government. Besides, the "nuptial rites of the Hindus are intermixed with religion", and "the Government can never interfere in any part thereof unless the same shall prove destructive to public happiness." 109

The article on widow-remarriage suggests that Ramgopal Ghose and his associates were retreating from Derozio's ideal of uncompromising opposition to Hindu prejudices and superstitions. It is as if a protest against it that a writer in the Paper out of rational and liberal consideration desired the enactment of a law recognizing the off-springs of remarried widows as the legitimate successors to their ancestors. 110

109. Ibid.
110. Ibid, January 15, 1843.
E. The Bengal British India Society (1843): And Reforming Moves:

The Bengal British India Society, though a political organization, took up the question of socio-religious reform. But there was a great deal of difference of opinion among Young Bengal and their associates on the questions of reform. In 1845 the Society took up the question of polygamy. 111 Polygamy was described to be the prolific source of demoralization and crime, leading directly to acts of adultery, incest, abortion and infanticide. Some members went so far as to wish for an Act to make it illegal, while the majority were of opinion that it was supported by the injunctions of Hindu Shastras. 112 Ultimately, W. Theobald, the President of the Society, held that it was sanctioned by custom and that its proper check was to be found in the improvement of native mind by the diffusion of education and in the strong disapprobation of the custom by the Hindus. 113

It is curious that the Society failed to take a concrete stance on widow-remarriage. The editorial column of the Bengal Spectator and some correspondent writers in the

111. The Friend of India, February 27, 1845, p. 134; The Englishman And Military Chronicle, March 24, 1845.
112. Ibid.
113. The Friend of India, May 15, 1845, p. 312. The Englishman And Military Chronicle, February 18, 1845; The Bengal Hurkarau and the India Gazette, August 30, 1845.
Paper had already done a spade-work concerning the vindication of the sanction of the Shastras for widow-remarriage. Yet in 1845 the Society corresponded with the Dharma Sabha and the Tattvabodhini Sabha on the issue, but in vain.\textsuperscript{114} The Society then applied for opinion of some living Hindu Pandits as to whether remarriage of Hindu widows was prohibited by the sacred books or not. No definite stance was taken by the Society in the matter. The President of the Society ended on the following note: "When Hindoo women are taught as they ought to be, ... Hindu widows will overcome it (the prejudice against remarriage) and successfully assert for themselves the right of women."\textsuperscript{115}

In 1845 Hindu members of the Society confessed the ignorance of their females and took up the question of female education with earnestness. But nothing was done literally by the Society on the issue.\textsuperscript{116}

Young Bengal as a group thus failed to initiate definite moves in the direction of social reform. Isolated efforts on the part of some members of Young Bengal in the matter may

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{114} Mitra, Peary Chand, "Marriage Of Hindu Widows", \textit{The Calcutta Review}, Vol. 25, (July-December), 1855, P. 358.
  \item \textsuperscript{115} \textit{The Friend of India}, May 15, 1845; \textit{The Englishman And Military Chronicle}, February 18, 1845.
  \item \textsuperscript{116} \textit{The Friend of India}, May 15, 1845.
\end{itemize}
be cited. Ramtanoo Lahiree, while a teacher of Krishnagar school, encouraged the widow-remarriage movement started by Maharaja Srirish Chandra. 117

F. Compromising Tendency of Young Bengal.

Disciples of Derozio had begun to be compromising with orthodox practices - obviously a retreat from Derozio's ideal of uncompromising struggle against Hindu orthodoxy. Rangopal Ghose, who was once known as a heretic and did not take part in the "Shrad" of his grand-father, performed the "Shrad" of his mother by humbling himself before several "Dolopoties" (leaders of caste hierarchy in Hindu society), which was according to Kissory Chand Mitra, "an act of sorry hypocrisy in the life of one who had few disguises." 118 Again, he celebrated the Durga Pujah and other festivals in his house. He performed the funeral rites of his first-wife in the traditional manner. 119

Ramtanoo Lahiree, who threw off his sacred thread under unpleasant circumstances, 120 engaged a Brahmin cook for his

117. Bradley-Birt, F.B. Twelve Men Of Bengal In The Nineteenth Century, pp. 73 - 76.


120. For details Lethbridge, Sir Roper, Ramtanu Lahiri, Brahman And Reformer, p. 123.
family members in order to satisfy his wife.\textsuperscript{121} He gave his first daughter in marriage to a Barendra Brahmin. He pre-
formed the "Shrad" of his mother.\textsuperscript{122} All these tend to suggest that he observed some of the caste rules, though he once claimed in course of a conversation with Rajnarain Bose that he did not believe in restrictions on intercaste association and drinking.\textsuperscript{123}

Duckinarunjan Mukhopadhyay, who was most forward in breaking the caste rules relating to eating and drinking in his college days and accused the Brahmins of subverting the French Revolutionary principle of natural equality in his essay at the SAGK in 1843, lived like an orthodox Hindu after he had settled into Oudh as a loyal landlord in the post-Mutiny period. He gave his son in marriage to an Ajodhya Brahmin's daughter.\textsuperscript{124} A writer observed that the career of Duckinarunjan Mukhopadhyay, "anxious to pass for an orthodox Hindu, is a source of self-stultification and self-temoralization, not one of beneficent influence and regenerating power."\textsuperscript{125}

\begin{enumerate}
\item Gupta, Bepin Behari, \textit{Puratan Prasanga} (Bengali) (ed) by Bandopadhyay, Asit Kumar, 1st Pustak Bipani edition, p. 165.
\item Ibid, p. 164; Also Mukhopadhyay, Amitabha, \textit{Reform And Regeneration In Bengal}, p. 310.
\item Bose, Rajnarain, \textit{Atmacharit} (Bengali), p. 109; Also Sarkar, Jaskunath, "Rajnarain Bose", \textit{The Modern Review}, 1906, p. 317.
\item Ghose, Manmathanath, \textit{Raja Dakshinaranjan Mukhopadyyay} (Bengali), pp. 205-208.
\item "The Late Raja Dakshinararjan Mukherjee" by a Hindusthanee, \textit{The Bengal Magazine}, Vol. VII, August 1878 - July 1879, p. 132.
\end{enumerate}
The retreat from Derozio's ideal turned into rout with Peary Chana Mitra embracing spiritualism after 1860 and losing his early rationalist tone.

III. The Controversy Regarding Young Bengal.

Meanwhile, a controversy had started as to whether Young Bengal could be regarded as a body of real reformers of the country. According to a writer, Young Bengal were thoroughly convinced of the absurdity of the Brahmanical religion and customs and fully aware of radical changes in them all but remained indifferent to public weal. They were totally heedless of what misery befell their priest-ridden country. They never dreamt even of the fate of hundred millions, who were doomed to waver in the lowly depths of grovelling superstition and ignorance. They were aware of the trickeries of the Brahmins in imposing idolatrous system upon the countrymen for the enhancement of their secular interests. Yet most of them performed several Pujahs in their houses at the expenses of large money and followed all the customs of their ancestors, however absurd and inconsistent with reason. In their family circle they were rigid and staunch Hindus but abroad in European company they metamorphosed themselves into new beings, eating bread and drinking old Cognac without the least scruple of any kind, and nurling violent philippics against the religion of their ancestors. They lacked zeal, perseverance, fixed determination and natural judgement which were
essentially requisite in carrying all plans of reform into execution. 126

In defence of Young Bengal one under the name of S.C. Sen (Shyama Charan Sen?), a modest Young Bengal, wrote a letter to the editor of the Bengal Hurkarau. He wrote that an educated native thought it expedient to celebrate the Puja at home in order to preserve domestic peace. Any attempt to carry radical changes in domestic environment before the females were educated would be to part with dearest relatives. To hurl superstition away from a Hindu domicile before offering education to females was but exhibiting a premature and blind zeal in the cause. 127

According to a writer, Young Bengal had no legitimate end or aim save the acquisition of wealth and speculative knowledge. The majority of this class frittered away the best portion of their lives in vain and ignoble pursuits and were bent more on realizing selfish and sordid happiness than the "greatest happiness of the greatest number." He described Young Bengal as "those mushrooms of native society that have sprung up on the congenial soil of ignorance and immorality but will vanish suddenly as they have risen, and give place to a more useful and substantial order of plants." 128

126. A letter to the editor of the Bengal Hurkarau by "A Friend of India" dated October 18, 1848, The Bengal Hurkarau, October 21, 1848.
127. Ibid, November 2, 1848.
128. A letter to the editor of The Bengal Hurkarau by one under the name "Observer" dated November 21, 1848, Ibid, November 27, 1848.
In vindication of Young Bengal another writer pointed out that the proper definition of the term 'Young Bengal' was wanting and that the ill-definition of the term had given rise to much frivolous discussion. He defined the term in the following words:

Young Bengal may be said to include that portion of intelligent Hindus, who were led to disbelieve the religion of their ancestors, and set at nought the authority of the Shastras. Guided more by enlightened views about religion, morality or ethics, they were inclined to expose the system of Hindu idolatry - a circumstance, which has drawn upon their heads the wrath and indignation of the whole orthodox Hindus. They have been reckoned as a separate and distinct class, and their principles quite inimical to Hinduism. 129

It is curious that the writer referred to Rammohun as the leader of Young Bengal and disciples of Rammohun as members of Young Bengal. 130 It is, therefore, open to question whether the writer has taken the term Young Bengal to mean disciples of Derozio in the sense in which Peary Chand Mitra and a number of writers later took.

129. A letter of one under the signature of "K" to the editor of the Bengal Hurkarau, The Bengal Hurkarau, December 4, 1848. The writer has been identified by Chittabrata Palit with Kissory Chand Mitra - Palit Chittabrata, New Viewpoints on Nineteenth Century Bengal. p. 161.

130. The Bengal Hurkarau, December 4, 1848.
Young Bengal earned the derisive epithet of a set of youth as drunkards and beef-eaters rather than reformers. In December, 1848 the editor of the Bengal Hurkarau wrote:

"The term Young Bengal ... is generally used to designate a class, who have exchanged the faith of their fathers for the beef and beer of the foreigners."\(^{131}\) Almost similar view regarding Young Bengal appeared in some periodicals before or after 1848.\(^{132}\)

In defence of Young Bengal a writer wrote in the Bengal Hurkarau in 1848 that the designation Young Bengal was applied in different senses by different people. Some members of Young Bengal might be addicted to bottles or "beef-sticks" but it was not a necessary or essential distinction and in no way a commendable one.\(^{133}\)

In the beginning of the second half of the 19th century the contemptuous definition of the term Young Bengal with a sarcastic fling upon his worth as a reformer appears in the following observation of a writer:

\(^{131}\) Ibia, December 5, 1848.

\(^{132}\) The Friend of India, February 13, 1845; The Indian News and Chronicle of Eastern Affairs, August 31, 1849, p. 363, The Morning Chronicle, April 18, 1856.

\(^{133}\) A letter to the editor of The Bengal Hurkarau under the signature of N.C.C. dated November 4, 1848, The Bengal Hurkarau, December 5, 1848.
Young Bengal is generally a Calcutta Babu - a Young man of course with a smattering of English ... He is ... ultra-fashionable in dress...He ... harrangues his countrymen, ... setting forth in glowing terms his own importance as a reformer of the times... Money and sensual delights are the goddess of his idolatry ... He eats beef, cracks the whole bottle of cognac at Spence's or Wilson's but as soon as he makes his appearance in Native Society, he is as it were metamorphosed into a new being. He is then a pattern to the thorough-going Hindu.  

Two questions now need be answered. Firstly, what is meant by Babu or Naba-Babu culture? Secondly, what is the similarity or dissimilarity between Young Bengal culture and Babu or Naba-Babu one?

The term Babu is derived from the word "Bapu", which is derived from the word "Bap" or "Bapa", that comes from the Sanskrit words, "Bapra" or "Bapta". The title, "Babu" was usually given to the Hindus or the non-Muslims of some status and used in a sense of courtesy. But the term acquired a special connotation in the second half of the 18th century Bengal. It denoted the novo riche i.e. the Dewans, Banalans, and Mutsuddis (say, men like Nanda Coomar or Canto Babu) from 1757 to the end of the period of Warren Hastings.

This wealthy class owed its rise to the breakdown of occupational caste ascriptions and acquired huge wealth in an ill-gotten manner. They adopted a new style of life after the English fashion. But they were far from being modernizers. They were self-seeking, sophisticated, heartless and oppressors. They spent money upon the construction of temples and performance of Pujas, marriage, "Shards" etc. and encouraged a trend of religious conservatism. They encouraged "Kabigan", "Half-Akhrai", "Full-Akhrai", "Panchali", "Tappa" etc. They also frittered away money in arranging "Nautches"; or in maintaining Garden-Houses and "kepts". They were sycophants of the English rulers, and were desired by the Government to maintain "Dols" or groups to establish their supremacy over the society.¹³⁵

The second category of Babus grew up since the period of Lord Cornwallis. It included the Dewans, Mutsuddis, Banians, Zamindars and Zamindar-merchants. Men like Radhakanta Deb, Ram Comul Sen, Radha Madhab Banerjee, Rammohun Roy and Dwarkanath Tagore belonged to this category. In mental composition and outlook there was a difference between the first and second category of the Babus. The Babus like Radhakanta Deb and Rammohun Roy were learned in English and Sanskrit. They were advocates of English education. They were divided into two groups relatively conservatives like

¹³⁵. Sanyal, Abanti Kumar, Babu (Bengali), pp. 11-16, 19 - 32.
Radhakanta Deb, or Ram Comul Sen and liberals like Rammohun or Dwarkanath. The former group was opposed to the abolition of Sati and idolatrous worship which the latter group stood for. However, both the first and second category of Babus shared many things in common. Both spent money upon unworthy pursuits, say, maintenance of "Kepts", garden-houses and entertainment of the Englishmen with English food and drink and "Nautches" on the occasion of the Durga Puja and some festivals, fascination after English luxury and fasion, love of English or forbidden food and drink. Dwarkanath Tagore outstripped the first category of Babus in imitation of English fashion. 136 Many Hindus suspected that Rammohun had had food and drink with the Muslims. 137

At the beginning of the 19th century the term Babu was used to mean not the wealthy aristocrats but the sons, descendants or successors of the first category of the wealthy Babus of the Hastings period who spent the ill-gotten wealth of their ancestors in immoral and unbecoming pursuits. They received nominal education. They were immoral, licentious, addicted to wine, visited prostitution, committed adultery and debauchery, and did all that was not worthy and becoming. In fact, they were synonym for all that

was immoral and degrading. They formed the theme of satirical works, like "Naba-Babu Bilasa" of Bhabani Charan Bandopadhyay. They were called "Naba-Babu". 138

Later the term "Naba-Babu" came to mean a number of English-educated youths who talked tall of reforms but were immoral. Some of them became "Keranies", some Deputy-Magistrates, while some Brahmas. Some talked of female education, female emancipation and widow-remarriage, while some of a temperance movement. But these advocates of reforms were addicted to wine and in the habit of promiscuous intercourse with females. Immorality and licentiousness were the very characteristics of these youths. These Naba-Babus became the subject of censure and ridicule in a number of contemporary writings. 139

The term "Babu" was used against the name of most members of Young Bengal. Most of them had fascination after English culture. But the socio-economic origin of Young Bengal was different from that of the first and second category of Babus or even the Naba-Babus of the 19th century, though Duckinarunjan Mukhopadhyay had some connection with the Tagore family. Young Bengal shared some of reformist ideas as well as limitations of Rammohun and Dwarakanath. But they did not represent those major pompous and unworthy

138. Sanyal, Abanti Kumar, Babu, pp. 39-44.
139. Ibid, pp. 44 - 59.
elements with which Babu or Naba-Babu culture is derisively associated by a number of writers. The term Young Bengal was not a synonym for immorality and licentiousness of the English educated Naba-Babus of the later period. The vices of these Babus of rather fourth and final category were characteristic not of Young Bengal but of its pretenders.

The Young Bengal may be described as "Students", rather as "Babus" or "Naba-babus". The term "Student", meaning a Young reformer, has been used by Max Weber. The Weberian "Student" does not totally forsake tradition and the cultural link with the past. His roots are found in the traditional culture.

Young Bengal might be held responsible to some extent for the growth of certain traits of English-educated Naba-Babu culture. Some members of Young Bengal in their initial non-conformist impulse turned to drink wine and to eat beef or forbidden food as a badge of unorthodoxy and civilization. It is coincident that the Naba-Babus took wine or forbidden food as a mark of emancipation from orthodoxy. Since late 18th century it was not uncommon to find the Babus entertain the English with English dishes or drinks and in an English manner on the occasion of the Durga Puja and other festivals. Rammohun and Dwarkanath followed the practice.  

140. Ibid, p. 48.
But the direct and open attack on the Hindu taboos on food and drink was launched by some Young Bengal and this might have indirectly contributed to the growth of the tendency of the Naba-Babus to violate the Hindoo taboos in respect of food and drink, or to turn drunk.  

The reckless and violent spirit exhibited by some members of Young Bengal in their adolescent enthusiasm for reform for a time might be said to have been imitated by a number of Naba-Babus. They repeated before the Goddess of Kalighat - "Good Morning, Madam," or refused to take an oath by taking the Ganges' water in their hands in the style of some Young Bengal.  

But some members of Young Bengal like Krishna Mohun Banerjea sharply reacted against the immoral pursuits of the English-educated Babus in the name of social reform:

It is to be regretted, only, that our reformers are generally men of licentious habits and dissipated character, and that love for food proscribed by the Shastras, and morbid anxiety for promiscuous intercourse with females of all orders, are the chief cause of their liberalism.  

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142. Ibid, pp. 44-45.
Before K.M. Banerjea could have the arrogance to write that, he should have given up the habit of drinking wine and spirituous liquor. It may be noted that Krishna Mohun, known as "Kristo Banô", achieved notoriety as a drunkard. But in 1844 the Bengal British India Society appealed to the Government to adopt measures for the suppression of drunkenness in the open street. The Hitaishanee Sabha of Konnagar (July, 1852 - May, 1855) carried on correspondences with the Government (on June 25, July 25 and November 2, 1853), urging it to put down licensed liquor shops in Konnagar, however in vain. Peary Chand Mitra raised his voice against drunkenness in his Bengali composition "Mad Khaya Bara Day Jat Thakar Ki Upay" (1859). He also poured scorn upon the Naba Babu culture in his book Alalar Ghare Dulal. The Jnananveshan, as noted before, was vocal

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144. Debendranath Tagore in a letter to Rajnarain Bose dated Agrahayon 9, 1777 Saka (1855) wrote as follows: On Agrahayon 5 of the year Debendranath went to Burdwan to attend the birth-day celebration of the Maharaja of Burdwan. In the dining hall Krishna Mohun got intoxicated with wine so much that he talked loudly, using offensive and abusive words, which seriously shocked Debendranath and his associates. Debendranath expressed doubt as to whether the precepts of Jesus took root into the mind of Krishna Mohun. Somnath Roy's letter to the editor of the "Desh" on 'Burdwan Rajbati', October 19, 1993 (Aswin 23, 1400 B.S.), p. 7.


147. Bandopadhay, Asit Kumar/ Peary Chand Rachanabali (Bengali), pp. 141-187.

148. Ibid, pp. 46, 64.
against the arrangement of "Nauches" during the Durga Puja made by the 'Babus'. It appealed to them to spend money in worthy and useful pursuits.

In those ways some members of Young Bengal may be said to have started a reaction against the Babu culture, which reached its height in trenchant remarks of Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay in his Bengali composition, "Babu".  

A controversial discussion was started by many letter-writers in the Citizen of 1853-54 as to whether Young Bengal was a set of anglicized youths, or men of no-fixed principles, or social and intellectual reformers of the country. But the term Young Bengal has been taken in a very general sense of educated natives or educated 'Babus', though some points of discussion might happen to be relevant to an assessment of Berozio's disciples.

Shoshee Chunder Dutt (an uncle of R.C. Dutt, I.C.S.) in his essay, "Young Bengal or Hopes of India" meant by the term 'Young Bengal' educated natives in general. His observation about Young Bengal suffers from hasty generalization

149. Sanyal, Abanti Kumar, op. cit., p. 58.

150. A letter to the editor of the Citizen by one signed "Brick" dated April 22, 1853, the Citizen, April 23, 1853;
A letter to the editor of the Citizen by one signed "Tom" dated June 15, 1853, The Citizen, Friday, June 17, 1853; A letter to the editor of the Citizen by one signed "A Rat Catcher" dated June 11, 1853, the Citizen June 21, 1853.

151. Shoshee Chunder Dutt's "Young Bengal or Hopes of India" (1848) was published in 1854.
on many points. But some of his remarks might give one cer-
tain clues that might be used in assessing the role of Young
Bengal. According to Shoshee Chunder, Young Bengal was sub-
divided into two sections - the moral and the immoral, the
educated and the uneducated. 152 Young Bengal liberal and
magnanimous was quite distinct from Young Bengal insolent
and profligate. Young Bengal hard reading had no affinity with
Young Bengal hard drinking. 153 The classification of diffe-
rent groups of educated natives made by Shoshee Chunder
suggests caution against the confounding of Young Bengal with
the pretenders of the name.

Shoshee Chunder contended that the bulk of the educated
natives had forsworn their old faith but had not had time to
get a new one. 154 Shoshee Chunder's contention might provide
a handle to defenders of Young Bengal against the charge of
atheism that had been brought against some of them in the
earlier period.

Shoshee Chunder admitted the contradiction of educated
natives between thought and action, referring to their
English fashion, manner and style abroad and orthodoxy at
home 155 - a contradiction from which Young Bengal was not free.

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152. Dutt, Shoshee/"Young Bengal Or Hopes of India",
Essays on Miscellaneous Subjects, p. 6.
154. Ibiü, p. 34.
In defence Shoshee Chunder wrote that by a different course they would not only lose their respect in society but also their influence with neighbours and relations. This might be a consideration of some members of Young Bengal.

Kristo Doss Paul in his 'Young Bengal Vindicated' (1856) meant by the term Young Bengal the educated and liberal-minded portion of the native community. He referred to David Hare as the mentor of Young Bengal with his eloquent praise of Hare's role in the intellectual and moral regeneration of Bengal. Hare had no doubt great influence upon Derozio's followers. Yet the impact of Derozio's thoughts and teachings was undeniable. Kristo Doss did not specifically mean Derozio's followers by the term Young Bengal. Yet he, like Shoshee Chunder, offers some hints, which might be used in making an assessment of Young Bengal.

Kristo Doss wrote that Young Bengal was neither wholesale condemner of Hindu religion, nor a sworn enemy to everything that was Hindu. There was a time when the elder portion of the educated natives raised a cry against everything Hindu and for everything English. But the days of national

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156. Ibid, pp. 31 - 32.
158. Ibid, p. 474.
159. Ibid, pp. 475-479.
detraction and contumely were no more. Sometime ago it was a fashion to cry down the language of our country. But the educated natives were later zealous advocates of Bengali. It was improper to say that they had been denationalized by imbibing English thoughts and communing with English feelings.\textsuperscript{160}

Kristo Doss's observation regarding the contempt of Young Bengal for everything Hindu or Bengali in the earlier period was a generalized one since the members of Young Bengal were not all haters of Hinduism and Bengali. Some members of Young Bengal in their adolescent enthusiasm got so much intoxicated with the west that they showed outward hatred for everything Hindu for a brief while. But they gradually turned to be sober and moderate in temper in later years and began to be compromising with orthodoxy - a trend of transformation which Kristo Doss pointed at.

Defending Young Bengal from the charge of atheism, Kristo Doss wrote:\textsuperscript{160} and:

The freedom/boldness with which Young Bengal attacks Hinduism, and exposes the hollowness of the fabric of Christianity, have been mistaken for a want of faith in the Supreme creator.\textsuperscript{160(a)}

\textsuperscript{160}. Paul, Kristo Doss, 'Young Bengal Vindicated', pp.12-14.
\textsuperscript{160a}. Ibid, p. 18.
But Young Bengal believed in existence of one uncreated and Immutable being. His religion was what Leigh Hunt called the Religion of the Heart. He was the follower of God and God alone. He was no advocate of the intermediate agency between the almighty and himself. He 'abhors all priestcraft and all equivocations in the name of God.'

Kristo's observation suggests that the educated Youths, including disciples of Derozio, who were critical of Hindu religion, were not atheists and that their chief target was the priestcraft in the name of religion and God. In this connection Kristo Doss remarked: "He is his own priest - his sincerity the incense he burns- his love - universal, brotherly, heavenly love - the only offering to propitiate Heaven." Kristo Doss's remark might reflect the spirit of the theo-philanthropy of the Hindu-Theo-Philanthropic Society (1843) with which Krissory Chand Mitra was associated or of universal theism of Kusick's note on religion (1854-1855).

Kristo Doss described Young Bengal or the educated natives as the reformers of the country. He spoke of their co-operation with Bethune in his philanthropic exertions, continuance of Rammohun's endeavours in the cause of reform, petitions to the Legislative Council for an act in favour of widow-remarriage and disregard of prohibitions upon visiting abroad spheres of reform in which Derozio's disciples were engaged.

161. Ibid., p. 19.
162. Ibid.
Kristo Doss referred to the contradiction of Young Bengal between tall talks of reforms and low performances. But he contended that great reforms had been the work of time. He added that men were so opposed to reform that even centuries might pass away. 164

Kristo Doss referred to the habit of drinking wine as a great vice in Young Bengal. But he also mentioned a temperance movement. 165 It is worth noting that while some like Krishna Mohun Banerjee were addicted to wine, some like Peary Chand Mitra raised a voice against drunkenness.

Keshub Chunder Sen in a tract, 'Young Bengal, This Is For You (1863)' underlined the inconsistency of educated natives in their thoughts and deeds - a limitation to which Young Bengal was subject. He remarked:

Witness the improvement societies, friendly meetings, debating clubs, literary associations etc. whose number is hourly increasing. Many and varied are the schemes proposed for the country's good but hardly do they pass beyond the pales of theory ... True, there are acute understandings and powerful intellects and brilliant theoretical attainments ... But where is the heart to work?... 166

Keshab added that there was a line of demarcation between a mind trained to knowledge and a heart trained to faith, piety and moral courage. If our educated countrymen had initiated themselves in the living truths of religion, patriotism would not have been a mere matter of oration or essay but a reality in practice. Then our countrymen, consolidated by religious love, would have realized the benefits of limited exertions and mutual sympathies and effectually surmounted many of those difficulties in the way of social reforms, which were considered insuperable.167

Later Bholanath Chunder in his biographical sketch of Raja Digumber Mitra wrote that Young Bengal were incon siderable in number and without weight or authority in the community. They had not ripened with notions of a definite ideology.168 Social considerations obliged them to yield to the pressure of their surroundings.169 With many inward struggles, they decided to submit to the force of circumstances.170 Bholanath made a revealing observation that Ramgopal Ghose and Digumber Mitra celebrated the Puja not out of pious notion but out of a feeling of entertainments, which gave them an opportunity for the display of their newly acquired wealth.171

167. Ibid.
168. Chunder, Bholanath, Raja Digumber Mitra, His Life And Actions, pp. 268-269.
170. Ibid.
171. Ibid.
It may be concluded that Young Bengal were compromising in practice and inconsistent in their thoughts and deeds. But they were actuated by a reforming zeal, and not a set of anglicised and immoral youths. Some critics and admirers often overlook the social reform movement that some members of Young Bengal launched from the end of 40s of the 19th century.

iv. Young Bengal and Social Reform Movement.

A. Female Education

Some members of Young Bengal considerably helped Drinkwater Bethune, a member of the Legislative Council and the President of the Council of Education, in starting a female school in 1849. Duckinarunjan Mukhopadhyay offered Bethune his house of Boitkhana for a temporary site of the school without any rent. He also donated his personal library, a collection of books worth about five thousand rupees, to the school. For the purpose of the permanent site of the school he proposed to donate a large plot of land at Mirzapur valued at about twelve thousand rupees. Ramgopal Ghose, Peary Chand Mitra and Shish Chunder Deb — all sent their daughters to the Bethune school.


Bethune acknowledged with a grateful heart the services of Young Bengal. In his letter to Lord Dalhousie dated March 29, 1850 he made a special mention of the help of Ramgopal and Duckinarunjan along with that of Madan Mohan Tarkalankar. At the inception of the school Ramgopal and Peary Chand along with Madan Mohan Tarkalankar and Neel Comul Banerjea became members of the school committee, and Hurro Chunder Ghose Secretary to it at the proposal of Bethune. Hurro Chunder Ghose greatly assisted Bethune as a member of the committee.

Subsequently, Cecil Beadon replaced Bethune as the President of the Committee; and Hurro Chunder Ghose, Omrito Lall Mitra and Vidyasagar were among the Committee-members. The Committee issued a circular on December 24, 1856, emphasizing among other things free distribution of books and free instruction in accordance with the wishes of Late Mr. Bethune.

176. The Bengal Hurkarau, May 28, 1849.
177. Sarkar, Beharilal, Vidyasagar (Bengali), p. 397.
178. Bagal, Jogesh Chandra, loc. cit., p. 95.
Young Bengal were cautious in their approach to the education of Hindu girls in the school. In 1849 Duckinarunjan made it clear that the founders of the school did not desire that Hindu women be anglicised or turn imitators of customs and manners of European ladies, that never assimilated with those of Hindu society. He held that English as a medium of instruction would not be imposed upon the pupils. Hindu parents and guardians were left free to get their daughters educated either in English or in Bengali. He added that the chief object of education in the school was to make Hindu women worthy and useful members of Hindu families. 180 His idea seems to have been appealing to Bethune. The course of instruction, which excluded religion, left it optional for Hindu parents to have their daughters instructed either in English or in Bengali. Besides, it included training in plain and fancy works among other things. 181

But the force of Hindu religion and tradition restrained some of them from carrying on the movement for school education much further. Duckinarunjan stood for the education of girls for five years from the age of four to that of nine (then marriageable age) in conformity with the customs of early marriage and seclusion. 182 He held that a period of "five

180. The Bengal Hurkarau, May 26, 1849.
181. Richey, J.A. (ed.), loc. cit., pp. 52-53. The editor of the Sunbad Probhakur was happy to learn that education would be conveyed in Bengali and useful works - The Sunbad Probhakur, May 26, 1849 (Jaistha 14, 1256 B.S.), p. 102.
182. The Bengal Hurkarau, May 28, 1849; Also the Sunbad Probhakur, May 12, 1849 (Baisakh 31, 1256 B.S.), p. 81; May 24, 1848 (Jaistha 12, 1256 B.S.), p. 102.
years certainly is a time amply sufficient for young minds to attain sufficient proficiency in any language, to be able to read with the need of constant help, and to acquire ... craving for knowledge." It is also noteworthy that the prejudices of the countrymen neutralized the zealous exertions of Ramgopal in rendering services to the school.

In 1855, six years after the foundation of the Bethune school, Peary Chand Mitra, in conciliatory of native feelings and prejudices, advocated the efficiency of the zenna system of education through English or European Governess. He thought that this system was to be well suited to the domestic constitution of the natives, who were opposed to public education. The habitual association of native females with good European Governess would exercise a more healthy influence on the former than a mere smattering of Bengali or English. Interesting conversations on subjects of practical importance were calculated to promote thought and enquiry and thus gradually to advance the cause of truth. He, however, did not depreciate the utility of knowledge through books which, he desired, very often had to be converted into the staple of the conversation. He felt that a good series of books in Bengali, especially intended for females, was still a desideratum. He suggested that these books should contain

183. The Bengal Hurkarau, May 28, 1849.
lessons so arranged as gradually to exercise the different faculties so that the reader might possess a good judgement, right feelings and above all quiet but fervent piety. He felt that the interesting and instructive conversations of educated males in their family circle daily evening might advance the cause of female education. Disapproving strongly of the habit of drunkenness of a number of English educated youths of the time, he wrote: "Alas! the temptation for the battle is so strong, that the intellectuality and the play of gentler emotions must succumb to sensuality". However, he stressed the informal method of education of females through conversations at home. It is noteworthy that the Masik Patrika he started with Radhanath Sikdar in 1854 sought to instruct the females or to elevate their morals largely through conversational means.

Meanwhile, the Association of Friends for the Promotion of Social Improvement of Bengal founded by Kissoray Chand Mitra in his house of Kashipore on December 15, 1854, took up the question of female education. Debendranath Tagore was the President of the Association. Kissoray Chand Mitra and Akshay Kumar Dutt were Secretaries to it. Members of Young Bengal like Peary Chand Mitra, Chunder Shaikhur Deb, Radhanath Sikdar, Rusick Krishna Mullick and Shib Chunder Deb became members of it sooner or later. The Association worked with untiring

zeal up to 1857. It took up various social questions of the
day, viz. the abolition of "Ganga-Jatra" (the practice of
off carrying/a dying person to the bank of/Ganges) and cruelties
during the Charak Puja, female education, widow-remarriage
and measures against polygamy.186 Some members of it sent
their daughters to the school.187

Kissory Chand Mitra, a Secretary to the said Association,
started a female school in his house at Kashipore in
about mid 50s. It failed for want of students and sympathy
of the local people.188 In 1866 Shib Chunder Deb started a
school in his house at Konnagar.189

In 1864 Kissory Chand Mitra was bold enough to admit
the superiority of the school over the domestic system of
instruction. He, of course, did not depreciate the domestic
system. He was prepared to recommend it for those, who were
opposed to school education. But he advocated it not as a
finality and an ultimatum but as a tentative and transitional
measure.190 He also maintained this view in 1866.191

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186. Ghose, Manmathanath, Karamvir Kishorichand Mitra
(Bengali, pp. 100, 106-110.
187. The Hindoo Patriot, April 27, 1857.
189. Ghose, Abinash Chand, Naradev Shib Chunder Den-O-
Tatsanadharminir Adarsha Jibanalekshya (Bengali)
p. 35-36.
190. Mitra, Kissory Chand, "Hindoo women", The Calcutta Review,
191. Mitra, Nagendra Lall, "Kissory Chand Mitra", The
Bengal Magazine, Vol. VII (August-July, 1878-1879),
p. 125.
In 1864 he wrote that the school instruction "is after all the best and the most efficacious means for the promotion of female education." He suggested the formation of a society for the extension of female schools and thereby of female education. He placed his reliance on the generous assistance of the missionary and official gentlemen. He ended on an optimistic note that the need of postponing the celebration of the early marriage of their girls, pending their further advancement in knowledge, would ere long be recognized by Hindu parents.

In 1866 Kissory Chand Mitra helped Miss Mary Carpenter in her move to establish a Normal School for the progress of female education in India. In that year Carpenter brought her influence to bear on the Government for the purpose of establishing a Central Normal Female School. In order to strengthen her hands a representation urging the necessity of such institution was submitted to the Government by several Hindu gentlemen including Kissory Chand Mitra.

Shortly, the progressive Brahmas of the Brahma Samaj of India launched a crusade for female emancipation by a firm protest against the system of zenna. Peary Chand Mitra,

193. Ibid.
who was leaning towards spiritualism, however, strongly advocated in 1872 the superiority of the zenna system of instruction in Hineu Shastras in producing females of good moral and religious character. But Krishna Mohun Banerjea and Ramtanoo Lahiree came forward to support the movement against zenna, when the champions of women's liberty started the "Banga Mahile" school, or the school for the Bengali ladies, Ramtanoo Lahiree sent his second daughter, Indumati to the Institution. He was well known to Sir John Budd Phear and his wife, the two real friends of women of India, and to Miss Heryod (later Mrs. Beveridge), who came to India to give education to women at the request of Manmohan Ghose. Krishna Mohun also stood against zenna and was an ardent champion of female education. He remarked:

Why can we not feel that the education of our sons and daughters like their feeding and clothing is our business? why are we so anxious to delegate our responsibility to Government and private societies?

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196. Lethbridge, Sir Roper, op. cit., p. 140.
Thanks to the exertions of the members of the Senate of the University of Calcutta like Krishna Mohun Banerjea and Ananda Mohun Biswas in 1877, female candidate got facility equally with male ones to appear at the University Entrance Examination. The first candidate, who openly sat for the examination in 1878 and became successful, was Kadambini Bose (later Ganguly). In order to frame rules enabling females to appear at the B.A. examination with the males a Committee was set up by the University Faculty of Arts. The Committee included men like Krishna Mohun Banerjea, Peary Chand Mitra, Abdul Latif, Rajendra Lal Mitra, Mohendra Lal Sarkar and Kali Charan Bandopadhyay.\(^{198}\) It is noteworthy that Peary Chand, who was a spiritualist and occupied with the thought of the domestic system of instruction, particularly in the Hindu Shastras, was on the Committee. It is noteworthy that the Sadharan Brahma Samaj with which Shib Chunder Deb was associated as the President for some time encouraged higher education and supported their efforts at professionalism.\(^{199}\)

\(^{198}\) Bagal, Jogesh Chandra, "Krishna Mohun Bandopadhyay", Sahitya Sadhak Charitmala (Bengali), No. 72, Vol. 6, (2nd edition), pp. 60-61.

\(^{199}\) Kop, David, "Rammohun And The Bengal Renaissance", Joshi, V.C. (ed). Rammohun And the Process of Modernization In India", p. 43; Also Gupta, A.C. (ed). Studies In The Bengal Renaissance, p. 502.
B. Polygamy

Meanwhile, some members of Young Bengal raised their voice against polygamy. In 1855 the Association of Friends For the Promotion of Social Improvement submitted a petition to the Government for the restriction of polygamy in accordance with the dictates of Manu and Yagnavalkya. It was an echo of Rammohun's voice for restricting polygamy in accordance with the sayings of Yagnavalkya and ancient sages. It naturally restated Rammohun's idea that a Hindu might be permitted to take more than a wife under specified circumstances, particularly in case of barrenness and unchastity of wife. Here was, however, a toning down of Krishna Mohun Banerjee's plea for the abolition of polygamy in the SAGK or in 1844.

Young Bengal was not, however, alone in the movement against polygamy. Vidyasagar launched a movement against it. On December 27, 1855 he submitted a petition to the Legislative Council for an enactment against it. The petition was signed by the Maharaja of Burdwan among others. Shortly, about one hundred and twenty seven petitions from different

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201. For Rammohun's idea Roy, Rammohun, Brief Remarks Regarding Modern Encroachments On The Ancient Right Of Female According To The Hindoo Law Of Inheritance, pp. 9-10.
parts of Bengal and one petition from Benaras were presented to the Government of India against polygamy. The Maharaja of Burdwan submitted a petition to the Legislative Council.204

The movement did not pass in vain. The Government took up the question of legislation against polygamy under serious consideration, but the uprising of 1857 intervened and no action was taken in the matter.204(a) It was sometime after the outbreak that the Government took up the question again. Meanwhile, the orthodox inhabitants of Calcutta and its vicinity, headed by Rajah Radhakanta Deb, submitted a counter-petition to the Legislative Council of India. They contended that the views and sentiments expressed in the petition of the Association of Friends for the Promotion of Social Improvement were not those of the community at large. They added that the texts of Manu and Yagnavalkya referred to by the said Association "may be cited in support of polygamy and do not authorise the passing of a law as prayed for in the said petition."205


205. Petition of Radhakanta Deb and others to the Legislative Council of India, dated January 1, 1862, General Department (Miscellaneous), May, 1866 (Letter No. 72), pp. 42 - 45.
Undaunted by the opposition, the Government appointed a Committee in order to elicit opinion on the desirability of a legislative measure for the suppression of Kulin polygamy. The Committee consisted of the following gentlemen - C.P. Hobhouse, H.T. Prinsep, Sutty Sharan Ghosal, Ishwar Chandra Sharma, Rama Nath Tagore, Jay Kissen Mukherjee and Digumber Mitra. The Committee was of opinion that polygamy was not sanctioned by the Shastras but an enactment against it would indirectly affect that general liberty, which was then possessed by the Hindus to take more than a wife. As such the Committee did not suggest the enactment of any Declaratory Law or legislative measure. While subscribing to the report generally, the Hindu members of the Committee save Vidyasagar concluded that the Kulins "Will settle into a monogamous habit like other classes of people, as education will become more general among them, and the force of social opinion be widely felt." Vidyasagar did not concur in the conclusion. He held that a Declaratory Law might be passed without interfering with that liberty, which the Hindus then possessed in matters of marriage. On February 1, 1866 Vidyasagar sent a second petition to the Government, praying for a legislative enactment against polygamy. The petition was signed by a large number of people including some members of Young Bengal

like Peary Chand Mitra, Ramgopal Ghose and Shib Chunder Deb.208

Some like Kissors Chand Mitra shared the idea that a Declaratory Law might be passed without interfering with the Hindu tradition of taking more than a wife under specified circumstances. He argued that "to those who profess Hinduism and repose their hopes of future happiness on the rigid performance of manifold rites, it enjoins the absence of male as an unspeakable calamity." As such "an act of legislature rendering polygamy penal under every shape would be regarded by our Hindu subjects as a direct invasion of that religious liberty". He, therefore, suggested the enactment of a law, abolishing polygamy except in well-ascertained cases of infidelity or hopeless barrenness. He also suggested that no man might be allowed to contract a second marriage during the life-time of the first marriage without procuring a license from the nearest judicial magistrate and getting it registered in the office of the said dignitary.209 Thus he shared Vidyasagar's idea of legislative enactment against polygamy without interfering with the religious liberty of the Hindus.

208. According to Chandicharan Bandopadhyay, the petition was sent to the legislative council on March 19, 1866. It was signed by two thousand and one hundred persons including some members of Young Bengal like Peary Chand Mitra, Shib Chunder Deb and Ramgopal Ghose - Bandopadhyay, Chandicharan, Vidyasagar (Bengali), p. 261-262.

C. Widow-Remarriage:

About the middle of the 50s of the 19th century Vidyasagar launched a campaign for widow-remarriage. He wrote two tracts on widow-remarriage—the first one in January, 1855 and the second one in October, 1855. In the first tract he reinterpreted Hindu Shastras in favour of widow-remarriage. In the second one he mainly contradicted the arguments of his opponents. 210

It is interesting that Young Bengal, though sympathetic to the cause of widow-remarriage, did not share Vidyasagar's belief that it was sanctioned by the Hindu Shastras. Peary Chand Mitra in his essay entitled "Marriage Of Hindu Widows" (1855) contended that the Hindu Shastras, particularly the Vedas, did not enjoin widow-remarriage. He cited the sayings of Neelcunt, the commentator of the Mahabharat, Vishnu, Catyana and Manu among the ancient sages and comments of English writers like Thomas Strange, Arthur Steel and Macnaughten in support of his contention. 211 It may be noted in this connection that a writer in the Bengal Spectator of April, 1842 argued that widow-remarriage was permitted by some Hindu Shastras including the Mahanirban Tantra. 212 Peary Chand held that the Tantras could be looked upon more as authority in

212. The Bengal Spectator, April, 1842, pp. 7-10.
spiritual than in social matters. 213 Again, the Bengal Spectator in its editorial column, as noted before, wrote that Raja Rajbullab Roy Bahadur of Dacca obtained a unanimous verdict of some learned pundits in favour of the marriage of his daughter who became a widow. The Paper also cited Devola's text in favour of his contention. 214 In this connection Peary Chand wrote that Raja Rajbullab Roy did not act upon the said verdict. He cited strange as arguing that the texts of Devola were applicable to the past and not to the present age. Referring to Manu, Peary Chand pointed out that the remarriage was not allowed for virtuous women. He also cited the views of Strange, Steel and Macnaughten to show that the remarriage of widow was in vogue among the lower castes but not among the higher ones. He wrote that the Code of Parsara from which Vidyasagar quoted a "sloka" in favour of widow-remarriage in his pamphlet on it was applicable to the "Coly Yuga" and not to the present age. 215 He came to the conclusion that the proper way to promote the cause of social reforms, including widow-remarriage, was not to vindicate the sanction of the Shastras for it but to inculcate broader principles of rationalism and liberalism in its favour — a

214. The Bengal Spectator, July, 1842, pp. 50-52.
break with the method of the reinterpretation of Hindu religion and tradition as adopted by a number of intellectuals from Rammohun to Vidyasagar. He observed:

It strikes us if the social evils of the country are to be removed, the establishment of particular points as to whether they are allowed by the Shaster or not cannot be productive of substantial service to the cause. 216

In his opinion the Shastras, though written in different periods and embodying the results of considerable knowledge and experience, could not be looked upon as the exponent of the eternal and immutable principles of right and justice in all its parts. It was written by human beings, and its inculcations must be with reference to their peculiar education, predilections, peculiar views of things and the state of society in which they lived. Their legislation might have suited to the age when it was made, but it cannot surely be introduced for all ages to come. The state of society was not stationary but changing, and the legislation, which suited to a nomadic, monastic or military life, could not meet the requirements of an industrial and social life. Moreover, the legislation of their sages on many subjects was not in accordance with the principles of right. (To

The legislation as to punishing the Sudras for reading the Vedas or sitting with the Brahmins in the same bed was wrong. Again, the legislation as to the panacea for many acts was not operative.216a He contended that the authority of the Shastra, if rendered subservient to the determination of a question, might be productive of immediate results. But "there can be no mistake that it will be on an insecure basis, to be shaken by the ordinary blast, while the sanction of moral principles rightly inculcated and applied, cannot but eventually triumph".216b He concluded:

Which then we ask is a better ground to stand upon — the authority of ancient codes, which in many parts are at variance with justice, or the authority of the eternal, immutable, unmistakable principles of natural reason and right, the standard of virtue, which the Shastras profess to represent?216c

Thus Peary Chand, who once struck up a revivalist note in his reinterpretation of Hindu religion and tradition in the SAWK, took up a hold rationalist stance on widow-remarriage in 1855.

216a. Ibid.
216b. Ibid.
216c. Ibid.
In 1854 Peary Chand Mitra and Radhanath Sikdar started the *Masik Patrika* in colloquial Bengali for the instruction of Hindu females. The Patrika sought to create moral impressions among women in favour of widow-remarriage. In an issue the Patrika published a letter of one Broja Nath Chakrabarti to one Mano Mohini, a widow, contending that widow-remarriage, though not in vogue in the country, was not improper. The letter might be published under fictitious names. Its object was to create a climate of opinion in favour of widow-remarriage through written dialogues or conversations between a man and a woman.

The petition, presented by the Association of Friends For The Promotion of Social Improvement on February 7, 1856, showed no willingness to enter into a discussion as to whether the remarriage of Hindu widows was authorized by the Hindu Shastras or not. It considered the measure to be very desirable and necessary on the ground of morality and humanitarian consideration of eliminating misery to which women were subject.

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218. The petition according to the editor of the *Hindoo Patriot* was, in large part, a substance of Peary Chand's article named "Marriage Of Hindu Widows" - *The Hindoo Patriot*, February 14, 1856, p. 41.

219. Ibid, January 24, 1856.
According to a writer, "Vidyasagar's crusade did not solely depend on the Shastras. It was a three-pronged attack. He appealed in the name of humanism and social justice and to reinforce it, he drew from the Shastras ... the Pundit was no less secular than the whole band of Young Bengal, and natural reason was his fluent driveshaft." \(^{220}\)

On October 4, 1855, Vidyasagar submitted a petition to Legislative Council of India for a legislative enactment in favour of widow-remarriage. The petition contended that the traditional interdict upon widow-remarriage was not sanctioned by the Hindu Shastras. Moreover, such prohibition was cruel, unnatural, productive of numerous evils and contrary to moral conscience. The petition prayed that an enactment recognizing the legitimacy of the issues of the remarried widows be made.\(^{221}\) The petition bore numerous signatures.\(^{222}\)

On November 15, 1855, J.P. Grant, a member of the Legislative Council, remarked:


\(^{221}\) Ghose, Benoy, *op. cit.*, pp. 255-256.

\(^{222}\) Bandopadhyay, Chandicharan, *Vidyasagar* (Bengali) pp. 214 - 216.

According to Chandicharan Bandopadhyay, some members of Young Bengal like Duckinarnunjan Mukhopadhyay, Hurro Chunder Those and Ramgopal Ghose were among the signatories to the petition - *Ibid.*
Council of India, prepared a draft of a law.\textsuperscript{223} It was sent to the Select Committee for consideration on January 16, 1856.\textsuperscript{224} Opposition to the Bill came not only from Radhakanta Deb but also from a number of inhabitants from Bengal and even from outside of Bengal.\textsuperscript{225} But in support of the Bill atleast twenty petitions (besides the petition of Vidyasagar) from different parts of Bengal and six petitions from outside of Bengal reached the Government of India.\textsuperscript{226} It is noteworthy that one petition signed by twenty six respectable persons including Maharaja Srish Chandra came from Krishnagur. Mahatab Chand, the Maharaja of Burdwan, supported the cause of widow-remarriage. One petition signed by about six hundred and eighty five persons including Shib Chunder Deb, Digumber Mitra, Peary Charan Sarkar and Ramnarayan Tarkaratna came from Calcutta.\textsuperscript{227} The petition of the Association of Friends for the Promotion of Social Improvement was signed by about three hundred and seventyfive persons including Rusick Krishna Mullick, Kissory Chand Mitra, Radhanath Sikdar, Peary Chandra Mitra and Bholanath Chunder.\textsuperscript{228}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{223} Ghose, Benoy, op. cit., pp. 256-257.
\item \textsuperscript{224} Ibid, p. 259.
\item \textsuperscript{225} Ibid, pp. 259-260, Basu, Swapan, op. cit., pp. 145-146.
\item \textsuperscript{226} Ghose, Benoy, loc. cit., pp. 260-261; Basu, Swapan, op. cit., pp. 143-144.
\item \textsuperscript{227} Ghose, Benoy, loc. cit., pp. 260-261.
\item \textsuperscript{228} Ghose, Benoy, op. cit., p. 261; Basu, Swapan, op. cit., p. 144.
\end{itemize}
It is noteworthy that Peary Chand Mitra, who held in 1853 that social matters including widow-remarriage ought to be excluded from the purview of legislation, stood for a well-defined law on it in his article named "Marriage Of Hindu Widows". He pointed out several omissions in the draft Bill on widow-remarriage as presented by Grant.

1) When the existing law was diametrically opposed to such marriage, it was quite possible that the facts of marriage might be disputed in the Court of Justice. The law should lay down what procedure would make marriage valid. The modes of solemnization of marriage might be left to the parties themselves, who would act according to their convictions.

2) The Bill did not state the age at which widows were to be married. A widow ought not to be married unless she arrived at her majority.

3) It did not state whether a widow could marry at her discretion, or whether the consent of her parents or guardians was necessary in such a marriage, or whether a widow could be married to a man having already one/or more wives or to a man of a different caste.

4) It did not recognize the rights of remarried Hindu widows to the property of her deceased husband, unless any will relating to the disposal of property in her favour was made by her late husband during his life-time.

The petition of the Association of Friends for the Promotion of General Improvement pointed out more or less the same omissions of the draft Bill on widow remarriage as shown by Peary Chand Mitra, though in a different language. It, however, suggested that in lieu of the proposed Bill a general marriage Act be passed. It drew up a sketch of the proposed Act. The noteworthy points were the following:

1) A man and a woman of any religious persuasion, not being minor or christian, might enter into the wed-lock, and solemnize their marriage in any form of words. The parties to the marriage were to subscribe to a declaration in the form in the presence of witnesses. The declaration need be registered within six months after the date of marriage. Such marriage would then be held valid, any usage or custom existing to the contrary notwithstanding.

232. Declaration A
Brojonath Chuckerbusty, widower or bachelor and Monomohini, widow or spinster, do hereby jointly or solemnly declare that 'of our own free will and accord we have solemnized our marriage with each other on this ninth day of May, One thousand and Eight hundred fifty".
Witness our hands etc.
The above declaration was signed in the presence of ..................
2) The Civil rights of the parties should in no way be affected by the marriage.

3) When a man, after his marriage, would subscribe to an agreement in the form B \(^{233}\) in the presence of witnesses - the agreement being registered within six months after the date of its execution, the marriage should be binding upon him except in the case of the unfaithfulness of a woman to marriage-bed being proved in a competent court of justice.

4) The registration of the marriage declaration and agreement would be done in the office of the Moonsiffs and Registrars in the district where the parties married resided.

5) No stamp paper was to be affixed on the marriage declarations and agreements, nor any fee to be paid at the time of the registration of such declarations and agreements.

6) The provisions of this Act were not obligatory on any person. They might be resorted to by persons of all religious persuasions (not Christians) who might wish to avail themselves of them. Those, who did not avail themselves of the Act, would be at liberty to follow the existing usages of the country as heretofore.

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233. Agreement B
Brojonath Chuckerbutty [declare\(\) that I\(\)] having taken Monomohini as my wedded wife on this day, do hereby bind myself not to contract a second marriage during her life-time, and in breach of this engagement on my part, to pay to her the sum of company's Rupees \(\ldots\) on the date of my second marriage.
Two or three things are noteworthy in this connection. The proposed general marriage act of the said Association was to be a permissive piece of legislation. It would have no universal applicability. It was not to interfere with the religious usage or ceremonies of the Hindus in general, nor to do violence to the religious feelings of the country-men in general. However, Vidyasagar did not seem to have conceived the idea of a civil marriage act at the time when the widow-remarriage act was going to be passed or passed. Such an act was passed primarily through Keshub Chunder Sen's initiative in 1872, about fifteen years after some members of Young Bengal had contemplated it. 234

The whole-remarriage law was prepared in April, 1856 through the initiatives of Europeans like J.P. Grant, a member of the Legislative Council. Grant was greeted with applause by Maharaja Srish Chandra of Krishnagur, Raja Pratap Chunder, Ramgopal Ghose and Pundit Taranath Tarkabachaspachi among others. 235 But the Act, which was passed on July 26, 1856 (Act XV of 1856) did not fulfil the demand of the Association of Friends For the Promotion of Social Improvement i.e. the demand for a general marriage

234. Ghose, Benoy, op. cit., p. 263.

It is, as it should be, permission law, but unfortunately it prescribes neither registration nor any other mode for establishing the validity of marriage in this land of false accusation, where it is so liable to be disputed by interested parties. The Committee cannot therefore help repeating their convictions that it must be soon followed up by more Catholic Marriage Act like that contemplated by the Association on the defective Marriage Act (of 1856). 236

However, some members of the aforesaid Association appeared as guests at the ceremony of marriage of a couple of Hindu widows, and thereby added strength to those committed to the promotion of that reform. 237 Some members of Young Bengal like Ramgopal Ghose and Peary Chand Mitra were present on the occasion of the first widow-remarriage in Calcutta on December 7, 1856, which took place under Vidyasagar's initiative. 238

It is noteworthy that later Peary Chand Mitra, as noted before, advocated austere widowhood. 239 He failed to maintain consistency in his stance on widow-remarriage

237. The Hindoo Patriot, April 23, 1857, pp. 33 - 34.
239. For Details Chapter VII, Section II, p. 468.
or on social reformation. This was largely due to his occupation with spiritualism after 1860.

D. Caste:

In fine, one may note the views of some members of Young Bengal on caste. In 1851 Krishna Mohun Banerjea in an essay named "An Essay on Hindu Caste" wrote that there might be distinction between one man and another on the basis of merit, office and power, but the distinction on the basis of caste did not stand the test of reason as well as the Christian principle of equality. For the sake of a national union he, however, advocated the abolition not of quadruple distinctions but of multiple divisions of caste. He also suggested relaxation of restrictions of caste and breakdown of occupational caste ascriptions. It is noticeable that he, as noted before, did not stand against four-fold divisions of caste in the SAGK period. In the Bethune Society in 1874 he observed: "The institution of caste was a gradual formation .... for the benefit of society and not for its embarrassment". Thus Krishna Mohun, though a converted Christian, did not advocate the abolition of caste.


v. **Contributions of Young Bengal:**

One may, however, contend that Young Bengal had some contribution to the socio-religious reformation of Bengal. Some members of Young Bengal voiced for the first time a demand for a civil marriage act amidst widow-remarriage movement. The idea of Peary Chand and some members of Young Bengal (expressed during the widow-remarriage movement in about mid 50s of the 19th century) that the best way to promote social reforms was to inculcate the broader principles of rationalism, morality and liberalism is unique not only in that age but also in these days, though some like Peary Chand failed to maintain consistency. Some members of Young Bengal played a role in the movement not only for widow-remarriage but also for the abolition of polygamy, though in specified circumstances. Some members of Young Bengal considerably helped Drinkwater Bethune in establishing a female school at the initial stage, while some later became an advocate of the higher education of Hindu women.

vi. **Limitations of Young Bengal Movement:**

Yet Young Bengal shared the basic limitations of a number of intellectuals of their days. They were occupied with Hindu and not with Muslim tradition. They also did nothing for the improvement of the lot of the Muslim women. Quite revealing was the following observation of Peary Chand Mitra on the education of Mahomedan women in the Bengal
Social Science Association in 1868. He wished to know whether any step was taken for the education of Mahommadan women. The efforts that were being taken in the cause of female education among the Hindus were well known to him. He, therefore, liked to hear if there was any similar movement among the Mahommadans. 242

Even the reforming endeavours carried on by Young Bengal in the direction of Hindu female education and emancipation did not yield much in practice. As Krishna Mohun said in the Bethune Society in 1871 that little had been achieved in the cause of female education. He added that if every Bengali did his duty as an educated man to his wife and daughters, the shortcomings he alluded to would be at once remedied. 243 Already in 1869 Shib Chunder Deb in his replies to enquiries on the subject of female education in the Bengal Social Science Association held : "A taste for reading and writing is fast growing in Hindu families ... Little seems to have been done in Orissa and the districts of Bengal after withdrawal from the school." 244 Krishna Mohun

Banerjea said in the above Association in 1871:

"There are very few educated ladies in comparison with our educated gentlemen ... It is this, gentlemen, which, I think, it is your duty to rectify." 245

One implication of Young Bengal movement was that it was primarily concerned with the upper caste Hindus. It appears from the writings in the *Bengal Spectator* and Peary Chand Mitra's article, "Marriage Of Hindu Widows" that widow-remarriage was in vogue among the lower order of Hindus. The schools for female education started by the Christian Missionaries attracted females of lower castes. Polygamy was in vogue particularly among the Kulin Brahmins. There was also not so much rigidity of caste rules among the lower as among the higher castes. Therefore, the movement for widow-remarriage, female education, restriction on polygamy and relaxation of caste rules primarily concerned the upper castes.

The enormities of the Charak Puja prevailed among the lower order of the countrymen. Little was done by Young Bengal as the issue. Kissaory Chand Mitra, as noted before, ended on an optimistic note in the Bengal social Science Association in 1868 that cruel practices during the Puja

would gradually die down with the natural progress of society. Duckinarunjan Mukhopadhyay's observation in this connection in 1837 was revealing: "The enormities of that festival prevail only among the lower and barbarous order of the Hindus." The social mobility generated by Young Bengal was, one may contend, induced largely by the spree of money-making in most cases. Some like Ramgopal Ghose, Peary Chand Mitra and Tarachand Chuckerburtee in abandonment of their occupational caste ascriptions turned to trade and commerce. But Ramgopal later submitted to "Dolopties" or caste hierarchy in society.
