

**A LECTURE**  
**ON**  
**FEMALE EDUCATION IN BENGAL**

**DELIVERED AT**  
**THE BETHUNE SOCIETY**

**BY**  
**KUMAR HARENDRA KRISHNA.**

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**CALCUTTA.**

**PRINTED AT THE BENGAL PRESS.**  
**1863.**

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**HARENDRA KRISHNA DEB.**

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## FEMALE EDUCATION IN BEKGAL,

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By the Hindu Religion every woman is a goddess. By Hindu practice she is not unfrequently a slave. If the mythological History of the country can be trusted to cover an argument, or to shape rational conviction in regard to social states as they existed thousands of years ago, the condition of Hindu-women question will be found to be as interesting a subject of enquiry, as any other social, religious or literary question in the antiquities of one of the first races of ancient Asia. The argument is irrefragable and the conviction is overpowering which support the view of female position in India rendered orthodox by the light of modern civilization. That position was by no means low or undignified. The Heroine of the *Ramayana* was not only highly educated, but married by election, followed her spouse to the unknown wilderness, for ten long years defied a monster, and displayed every virtue feminine and even angelic. The poet's conception of a being like Shita, even if no such personage really existed, fixes unalterably the creed that in the age in which he lived the Hindu Female was not the dark-souled trembling drudge she now stands

for, but asserted and was allowed her rights as the companion and equal of man. The balance of evidence in favor of such a condition of feminine existence is so heavy, that the degradation of the Hindu Female is now universally admitted to have commenced after the Mahomedan conquest.

Previous to that disastrous epoch the sociology of India might have furnished models for imitation to the world. Woman then commanded the most supreme respect and consideration at the hands of man. She adorned every walk of life, from the highest to the lowest. No bounds were apparently set to her intellect, no jealous suspicions as to her weakness immured her body. She sat next to the king upon the throne, she led forth armies on the battle field, mastered astronomy and figures, sung, danced and monopolised limning and medicine. The tendency of Sanscrit Literature, of the religion of the Hindus, is to elevate the female on a pedestal and to bid people worship her. Behold Shiva, the last God of the Hindu Trinity, lying prostrate upon the ground and a goddess trampling on his divine breast. The figure is the external and popular embodiment of, according to English philosophy, a superstition. Many are content to rest their faith and gorge their religious craving upon the goddess. To the masses of the Hindu population she conveys the material idea of a deity—grand, omnipotent, terrible. These look not beyond the outer shell of the religion to which they have been born and which they not unaccountably venerate. But to the student of philosophy who views mind and matter through a sun

telescope, who examines even the follies and the infatuations of a once glorious race with a minuteness and an interest not suggested by the outward phase of the objects of his enquiry, who traces with delightful enthusiasm in the adulterations and dovetailments of a splendid theology, social creeds and usages and injunctions which satisfy and meet the highest idealisms of chivalry; who discovers in possibly a wild custom, in a gross manifestation of religious credulity, the skeleton of a noble idea, the metaphored beam of an essentially chaste and healthy principle of social action—the orthodox image of the warrior goddess furnishes a key to the moral history of the Hindus long prior to the time her worship came into vogue, not to be neglected because other evidence in the same direction is plentifully available. If the epics of the Hindus had been swept away from the world's literature, if the *Ramayana*, the *Mohavarut*, and the *Puranas* had been burnt in some Alexandrian Library, if the Dramas of Kalidass and Burochee and the nine gems of the Court of Vicramaditya had not been written, or had been destroyed by the command of a bigot, that dark grim figure of Kallee trampling on the breast of Mohadeo would have sufficed to establish beyond cavil the position, that the present friends and promoters of Female elevation and emancipation in India, are not laboring to introduce an innovation into Hindu Society, to realize a chimera against every known characteristic of the native mind, or to implant an idea fundamentally opposed and antagonistic to the normal belief of the entire population. The transition from Mythology to

real life is not so violent or unnatural as to cut the ground from under the feet of the reformer who may seek to transfer heavenly usages to earth. On the contrary it is a fact well known in the History of early nations—one which fortifies and strengthens the conviction of the possibility of the reform so greatly needed and earnestly sought to be achieved by us, that human actions take their color and their course from the ascribed characteristics of Heavenly Beings, and may easily and without any stain of heresy, be made to affect similarity and assume cognate shape with the peculiarities of the legends which furnish the materials for the popular faith. The friends of Female education in the East have only to ride with the belief of the masses and to frame their schemes in accordance with the bent of the persons on whom it is necessary for them to operate, in order to excite sympathy and secure support. For, when the very theology of the people favors and upholds the idea for the success and wide dissemination of which they are striving, and the authentic History of the country exhibits female *savans* contesting the palm of Logic with the greatest thinkers of their day and standing forth unrivalled in the abstruse walks of astronomy and mathematics, it may safely be inferred that the disappointment and defeat which have hitherto attended the efforts of the earnest few who aim at re-ordaining the long obsolete usage of Female Education in India, are due to causes distinct and altogether different from those brought up to the surface of every enquiry regarding them. The high state of civilization to which the Hindus at one period of their History had attained,

the enormous progress made by them in the departments of art, science, philosophy and literature, their splendid social and municipal institutions, relics of which to this day ensure and bind together a marvellous nationality—afford conclusive evidence of the brilliant condition of Female intellectualism which co-existed with this brilliant civilization. It is absurd to suppose that the men who took philosophy to pieces, broke and reconstructed it after the most subtle metaphysical modes and mysticisms, who created a magnificent rhetoric and composed a grammar which cannot be mastered in less than a quarter of a century, were content to bear the companionship of wives and of daughters possessing only the form and the speech of humanity—that they could stifle the natural desire of impregnating the beings dearest to them upon earth, with a ray of the light which burned so intensely in their own breasts and with which they irradiated not only their own age but centuries yet unborn—that they allowed the fairest work of creation, which supplied the poetry of their souls, to live on like beautiful exotics, ravishing to the eye but repelling or indifferent to the sense of smell.

As it is impossible to conceive such an abnormal commingling of the highest intelligence with the lowest civilization—such a junction between the philosophy and inspiration of man with the darkness and voidism of woman, it is manifest that the theory of female ignorance which we are now called upon to assail and demolish, is not only not supported by the precedent of the Shasters, but is opposed and antagon-



istic to rational belief and is disgraceful to our antecedents.

The causes which have led to the present degradation of the femalehood of India are easily ascertained. The chief and root cause of the evil is the Mahomedan conquest. Before the despot of Guizni turned his horse's head towards the golden pagodas of Hindustan, female life in the country was sweet and honorable. But the trumpet-blast of the invader broke the charm which for thousands of years had invested its people with a blessing. It threw society into a frightful upheaving and down-sinking. War, waste and massacre overtook a population, enervated by ages of polish and of peace. A cloud burst upon the land, sweeping away in its impetuous fury the landmarks of centuries. The fire of poetry gave up its place to the fire of battle. The Hindu sage could not quietly pursue his meditations in even the wilderness, for the shriek of defeat and of death broke terribly upon his ear in the remotest corners of his wild retreat. Existence became a problem to be solved only by the strong arm and the quick eye. The scimitar could alone decide whether the Hindu was to live or to die. The trembling Hindu female sought the recesses of the Zenana. She no longer durst trust herself to the society of man; for lawlessness stalked abroad and rapine spared neither age nor sex. From the generation of educated women thus blasted in the bloom of life, posterity received the shock whose continued pressure has landed us upon our present misfortune. By slow and insensible stages the necessity

of one epoch of our History became the law of another. Though the budget of Indian existence no longer has to be framed on a calculation of the chances of a bloody persecution, and the flaming sword of the Mahomedan despot has disappeared from the horizon, yet the femalehood of India are afraid to issue from their dark retreat, refusing obstinately to take the hand held forth for their emancipation and caressing fondly the destiny which consigns them to the unlettered solitude of bolts and bars. They have been so long accustomed to the life which they now lead, the traditions of the higher rôle, which their sex once filled, have been so completely extinguished, the shock of the Mahomedan Invasion has so deeply affected their nerves, that it will be difficult to restore the normalism from which they have far out drifted away, and to re-seat them upon the pedestal from which they were, eight hundred years ago, rudely flung.

The first great obstacle to Female Education in India is presented by the social customs and habits which render the steps for such a purpose an appalling question of moral duelling. The most determined native gentleman cannot face the difficulty in the sense calculated to ensure victory. The greatest of our reformers have as yet succeeded only in effecting partial compromises. The Hindu Zenana consists of a planet and satellites. The planet is fixed and obstructive—the satellites can move only by the law of gravitation. Many of these are not permitted even the use of speech—a function which the greatest tyrants upon earth have never presumed to suspend.

The younger ladies have stated duties in the household to perform—which completed, they are free to sleep or to kill time with cards, beguile themselves with episodes from the *Ramayana* or *Mohavaruta*, or from epics of more questionable morality, examine the properties and fashions of their jewels, and discuss presents, dinner courses and matches. All this they can do, but they cannot read or write. Should any subaltern of the female hierarchy attempt to master the alphabets, the ridicule and the gibes of her companions suffice to scare her away from the good work. She can read only by stealth and write with bolted doors! The chief lady of the house whose accomplishments consist of rather a sharp tongue and much knowledge of the mysteries of confectionery, naturally despises the art of the School-master and is anxious to see her young helpmates despise it also. Under such a social system, ignorance is necessarily perpetuated from mother to daughter and rendered institutional.

But the Hindu Female, though, deprived of the stamina of Books, is not stupid. She possesses a superb intellect, a memory which enables a young miss of 8 years to repeat without an effort two hundred lines of the coarse disjointed doggerels which are transmitted from mouth to mouth connecting the Bengalee alphabets with the gods of the Hindu Pantheon, and a power of reasoning which not unfrequently makes Hindu wives czarinas over their husbands. Sharp-witted, brilliant in conversation and inimitable in repartee, the powers of the native female mind need only to

be trained and cultivated in order to ensure the same eminent educational results which have been attained in Europe. But it is in her moral inflexibility that the Indian beauty excels the femalehood of the world. If the height of moral virtue consist in the abnegation of self in all questions of social conduct, then the daughters of India have furnished results of moral sacrifice which in their wild stoic grandeur, surpass the firmness of the Roman warrior who thrust his right hand into the fire to save his country from a tyrant. The country in which Suttee is to this day an institution, notwithstanding British Law and British bayonets, needs not tremble at the threshold of an enquiry connected with the ethology of its women. That blazing horror compresses the highest virtues into a terrible episode ! The heroic woman whose affectionate love renders her callous to every sense of bodily pain, doubtless possesses the elements which under more favorable auspices should uplift her to the proudest summit of feminine divinity. But it is not only in the wild fury of passionate grief that the Hindu lady can put forth the firmness and command of mind which assimilate humanity to the godhead. Many here present, are familiar with the incidents recounted by Mill, of female strength of character in India, which throw completely into the shade the history of the Roman daughter. The filial affection which school boys are taught in their juvenile text books, to venerate and to imitate, saving an aged father from starvation in the dungeon of the despot, by the milk in the daughter's breast, is without doubt an effective lesson

to ages of civilized men. But the heroine of the Roman Empire risked, and only *risked*, her life to save the *life* of a parent. The daughter of the Rajah of Jeypore drank to the dregs the poisoned chalice to save her father's *empire* from the swords of the distracted suitors for her hand:—"Father," said the princess, "you gave me life, and I should be the solace of your age—not its curse! But for me, your subjects would eat the bread of peace and your soldiers would escape butchery. Perish such a dangerous and baneful existence! Give me the poisoned cup and I will fly up to the place from whence I came to blight your power and your happiness." Before the weeping Chief could stay the act of martyrdom, the venom had entered the throat of the beauteous Rajpoot girl for whose sake three armies were waging desperate war and the furies had been let loose upon waving fields and populous cities. Then again, behold the infant daughter of a poor Bhat Brahmin—the blood devoted witness of a treaty between the English and the Peshwa—resting her fair head upon her father's lap, removing with her small taper fingers the silken hair from her neck, and thrusting into the hand of her weeping irresolute parent, the dagger that should tap her life-blood, to be sprinkled over the gateway of the unprincipled violator of solemn treaties! The Hindu woman all over India is made of such mettle. She could not otherwise have dragged the seared existence of a widow with cheerful resignation. If India be ever saved, says the author of the "Private life of an Eastern King," it must be through the virtues of her women!



It is not possible to trace clearly the causes which overlaid the question of female Education in India with a religious bar. I have already shewn in a preceding part of this discourse that no such bar could have existed in the pre-Mahomedan period of our History. Since then a new social standard was formed, which superseded older customs and habits of thought. It is exceedingly probable that the Mahomedan conquerors infected their new race of subjects with their peculiar repugnance to knowledge. Jenghis Khan could not write!—and to this day many of the Chieftains of Upper India labor under a similar difficulty in signing their names. Amidst such wide-spread ignorance descending from the heads of society to its meanest members, what wonder that the lady who presumed to learn an accomplishment that should raise her above her spouse, was declared accursed. According to the peculiar usages of Hindu life, the wife is always a “very respectful humble servant to command.” This power of command could with very little self respect be exercised by a husband whose “very respectful humble servant to command” was a prodigy in spelling and the copy book, and whose mind was well stored with the knowledge which, Lord Bacon says, is the only true power. Self interest suggested therefore an expedient for putting down a rather inconvenient tendency to letters, and the Brahmin, never loath to increase the superficies of gaping ignorance, lent most willing assistance to the Sudra in this his urgent need. Female Education was denounced as irreligious—and, as the condition of a widow is the most frightful one that can exist for a blooming young lady

with an adoring husband, the alternative to Ignorance was declared to be—widowhood.

The lion thus planted unmuzzled in the way, the road to knowledge remained closed to the native Female, until a new race of rulers—the younger Aryan brothers, long lost in the snows of the Caucasus, unlimbered their guns in the country, and drove the Moslem before them. A kindred civilization to that the Hindus once had, but had lost, followed in chests of books and reams of writing paper. The magnetism of intelligence soon roused from their long sleep the men who had abandoned their minds to chaos. The son of Albion blew the trumpet blast of the Archangel—and the Hindu started to his feet. The warm touch of the fraternal hand re-kindled in him the dormant fire of his Aryan destiny. Slowly and silently he recovers ancient ground. His seats of learning have been re-opened. He has won test by test the academical Honors and titles which stamp the Scholars of Europe. Six Native Gentlemen, the flower of the Presidency College, have earned the Degree of M. A. in the important branches of Mathematics, Philosophy and History. A change has come over the spirit of the country. The dark dense clouds of ignorance which had shut in the horizon on all sides, have been swept away towards the Ocean, and the sun of knowledge irradiates the land with re-doubled lustre.

Is it surprising then that his rays should have penetrated into the Zenana, broken the gloom that encircled the minds of its inmates, pierced and perforated with a thousand holes the flimsy superstition under which ignorant men realized the luxury of command-

ing the esteem of still more ignorant women. Simultaneously with the growth of knowledge amongst the sons of Bengal, the femalehood of the country have commenced to understand and appreciate the higher civilization involved in the art of reading and writing. Clever men must have clever wives; or the marriage knot will be cut asunder, bringing society to the utmost peril. As unnatural is the condition of an old man with a young wife, so unnatural is the marriage of a Master of Arts with a woman who cannot think!

By the very nature of things such a wedding must ensure misery—and the Hindu *Pater-familias* is beginning to see his way into the new difficulty. In Calcutta the practice has been already introduced of examining brides in Geography and *Charoopat*. Anxious mothers, who look out for grand destinies for their little daughters, early take the precaution of preparing them with a little Bengalee and a little sewing scraped from a cheap Governess. The ancient superstition has completely disappeared in many places, and the only impediment now, to Female Education in Bengal, is the want of examples from the heads of Native Society.

The Education which the most fortunate Hindu Girl receives is, as I have already said, confined to a little Bengalee and a little sewing. It certainly suffices for a first start, the first break of the cold ice. But the question comes up for consideration, does it meet the ends of a healthy education? Does it satisfy the object for which it is necessary that our women should be educated? Are a little Bengalee and a little sewing the grand points to which every lover of India, native as well as European, is



driving his tired jaded hobby ? Is their absence the great evil to remedy which reformers have grown hoarse with preaching and school-boys have become bankrupt in stationery ? If those compose the Elysium in view of which we are cursing custom and the Shasters, we may as well give up the mad cry and direct the saved steam towards the Universities. It is not the faint unreal shadow of intellectualism, the mere figment of a cheap governess, a little Bengalee and a little sewing, that will give our educated young men the class of wives for which they now sigh—able and advanced far enough to afford them a rational retreat from the stiff prose of life ;—to sympathize at least with their mental pursuits, if not mingle in them.

It should be far indeed from our aim to make the women of Bengal philosophers or “ walking calculations.” Though they are quite capable of mounting the highest platform of a literary and scientific education, yet the interests of society demand that the mistress of a home should not be wrapped in figures concerning the stars. The figures, in order to keep her husband from debt and the Insolvent Court, should be more earthly. It is not necessary that Bengal should produce female Newtons and female Herschels as America is striving to produce. India once gave to the world a Lilabutte and the halo of her name has survived the wreck of ages. She may produce a second such meteor—and will in no distant time do so. But for the satisfaction of ushering a prodigy in three centuries, we are not certainly called upon to establish a system of female instruction calculated to sap the foundations of conventional morality.

It may be sufficient to hint that to the weak of mind much learning never fails to bring the curse of free-thinking.

Besides, we are not in need of men to take up the functions of men. India teems with a male population always equal to any amount of high intellectual work. It is not necessary to impress our Zenanas for the same object. Our need is to devise such a system of Education for the Hindu Female as will make her an agreeable companion, a good mother, an intellectual and loving wife and an excellent housewife. We want her to be well grounded in the moral virtues recognised by the civilization of which we are the co-sharers, and to possess those superior mental accomplishments which enable the wife to serve as a solace to the husband in his brightest and darkest moments, the mother to undertake or at least superintend the early instruction of her child, and the lady of the house to provide those sweet social comforts idealized by the talismanic word—home. These objects achieved we could safely leave the manufacture of Lilabutties to the wheel of genius. Such is the Education under the soft and serene influence of which the ladies of England have given a home to the intelligent English people which embodies half the blessings of Paradise !

It is not easy to describe the plan on which female education is now conducted in Bengal. No settled plan indeed exists under which a maximum of instruction may be imparted within a minimum of time. Almost all the female schools in the country are the result of individual labor and applica-

tion. The bulk of enlightened men have up to this moment withheld their active aid from such institutions on some plea or other. No imperial design is manifested in the federal efforts which have given us these schools in the Presidency or in the Mofussil stations. Single-handed, one man has had to achieve the work of many; and each brought to his task the fancies and the idiosyncrasies by which he is ruled. One believes in the expansive power of vernacular literature and would not listen to a proposition to include a little English in the curriculum. Another has faith only in an industrial education, and half the finances of his school is devoted to German wool and bobbins. A third is impressed with the conviction that neither Bengalee nor sewing will elevate the Hindu Female to the position so earnestly sought to be realized on her behalf—and an out and out English education is the panacea by which he will stand or fall!

One class of thinkers run distracted at the idea of a Public Education—and would wash their hands clean of any scheme that may embrace the withdrawal from the Zenana of even an infant of 5 years. Whilst another with equal nerve and temper deprecate Zenana instruction as a failure and a sham! Between these various and conflicting phases of thought and action, any thing like a good plan of female education has up to this moment remained unrealized in Bengal.

The only schools in which a decent order and amount of education is attempted, are the Bethune School under the able presidency of the Hon'ble Mr. Erskine and the

close supervision of the Head Mistress, Miss Goulding—and the school conducted under the energetic personal superintendence of the Rev. Dr. Duff, the earnest minded and philanthropic gentleman who now sits at the head of this assembly, the early pioneer of knowledge in Bengal, to whom the country is indebted for large intellectual benefits. In both institutions the rudiments of a Bengalee and English Education are carefully laid and the industrial branch of female accomplishments is most sedulously and successfully cultivated. Unfortunately however their range of utility is checked and circumscribed by the customs of the country.

The usages of the Hindus forbid the prolonged attendance at School of the native female after a certain age. The very short interval during which she is permitted to remain under instruction does not suffice to render her intelligent to the degree that would enable her to pursue knowledge without the aid of a governess. All the enervating influences of the Zenana are exerted to render her education a mockery. She sinks back into the lethargy from which she had barely been extricated. The work of twelve long months is demolished in three. The education she had once imbibed and which promised to bear luxurious fruit mellowed down into a very questionable sort of radiance.

— The remedy for such a disastrous fall lies only in an efficient system of Zenana instruction. If the mountain will not come to Mahomet, Mahomet must come to the mountain. If the Hindu Female is unable to continue longer at a public school than is consistent with national decency,

means should be devised to place at her service the advantages from which she has been unavoidably cut off. A plan of Zenana Instruction must be pursued which would effectually meet the peculiar requirements of the case, which would combine cheapness with healthiness, and pierce the native home with a light whose broad red glare shall illumine every dark spot in the minds of its inmates.

Such a system has already been in operation, though not on the grand gigantic scale on which its action is needed. Many a Hindu wife and Hindu daughter drinks in eagerly at the well of knowledge kindly placed at their disposal by the philanthropic labors of Mrs. Mullen and the pious English Ladies whom her example called into the same benevolent field. The History of Zenana instruction in Bengal is an honorable record of Christian charity. I shall read to you, Gentlemen, an interesting correspondence between the Government of Bengal and the Director of Public Instruction which will afford you an idea of the nature of the services rendered to the country by an English lady whose name ought unquestionably to be a household word in every Hindu family. Mr. Murray says :—

“The information required is on three heads, and I shall endeavour to answer them as fully as possible :—

1st.—The plan and system of the work.

2nd.—The names and social position of the Native gentlemen who support the work, and the nature of such support.

3rd.—The kind of Government supervision proposed. With regard to the first point, it will be as well to say a few words on the origin of these Zenana Schools. When the late Mrs. Mullens returned from England at the close of 1860, she was asked to



visit the house of a Native gentleman and continue the instruction (secular) previously begun by Mrs. Sale, the wife of the Rev. Mr. Sale of the Baptist Mission. My wife joined Mrs. Mullens in her visits to this house. The work rapidly increased on them, house after house was opened to their visits, till at length there were sufficient both to the southward and eastward of Calcutta to give Mrs. Mullens and my wife full employment: the expenses of the work to the southward were borne by Mrs. Mullens, and those to the eastward by my wife. Since Mrs. Mullens' death the work in both places has been carried on as before. I can only speak of the Entally or Eastern portion for which the aid of Government has been solicited. Several new houses, some since the application, have been added to the number, and more are now ready and anxious to obtain the benefit of Teachers. Hitherto, the work has been in a great measure elementary organization; its steady increase and the anxiety of the women to learn give us hope of being able to continue it to good effect, and Mrs. Murray has been induced to solicit Government aid, that so desirable a work so promisingly begun may not be dependant solely on the life or resources of a single individual. The plan for the future working of these Schools is as follows:—There are now two Native Teachers, it is proposed as houses increase to increase their number, concentrating the Schools as much as the system of female seclusion will admit of, without impairing the great object of being able to have a stated number of hours devoted daily to each house. Over these Native Teachers to be paid Inspectors (Europeans, if they can be procured,) who will be required to visit each house two or three times a week, and be responsible for the progress of the work and the attention of the Teachers under them. The responsible person to Government to be somebody who shall have the confidence of the Native community among whom she is to labor, whose duty it shall be to supervise a "Circle" of Inspectors, and their subordinate "Circles" of Teachers to whom they are to refer for instructions, whose advice they are to ask in all cases of difficulty, and whose time and labor are to be given gratuitously. This is the plan we

propose for these Zenana Schools, and Mrs. Murray is willing to continue her superintendence, as well as her pecuniary contributions as hitherto, adding thereto her guarantee to Government that the aid she may obtain shall be spent on these Schools and for the object for which it may be given. Her sole reason for soliciting Government aid is, as I have before said, to place the work, which has grown beyond the means of a single individual and is still increasing, on such a basis as will effectually prevent its dying out or languishing for want of funds.

“ The second point on which information is required is the name and social position of the Native gentlemen who support the work, and the amount and nature of the support given. To this ~~reply~~ briefly first, the support given has hitherto extended simply to permission to afford instruction to their wives and daughters, and leave to visit them for this purpose in their private apartment. Pecuniary aid from them we have not received, and any request for a money contribution would, in the present stage of matters, be the signal for closing the doors of their houses in our faces, and bringing the work to an untimely end. As regards the names and social position of the gentlemen in question, I will with pleasure furnish them, for His Honor the Lieutenant-Governor’s information, privately ; but in the present state of Hindoo society, when English ladies can only obtain access to the inmates of their Zenanas on sufferance, you will readily see that the mention of their names in a public document would, so far from doing any good, be the surest means of stopping the cause of female education. Those who now permit the visits of ladies would incur the reprobation of their stricter fellow countrymen, the permission would be immediately withdrawn (as it has been on one occasion,) and the wretched occupant of the Zenanas would be doomed to a still stricter seclusion than they are now subjected to. I may mention, however, that the gentlemen whose Zenanas are open to the visits of my wife and her teachers may be reckoned at from the highest to the lowest, from those who, living on their fortunes, keep their houses and carriages and a houseful of servants, and whose wives take no part in household

work, to those who are steeped in poverty, but being of good family, their wives are kept in seclusion (purdah woman) and yet in their seclusion obliged to work for a livelihood. I subjoin a list of the number of houses visited and the number of scholars; of these last three-fourths are grown up and married women, and one-fourth unmarried girls.

"The third point is one which I must leave entirely to the decision of His Honor. Mrs. Murray is prepared to enter into any feasible scheme of Government supervision, either by the periodical visits of any other lady or ladies (where they can be admitted), or by the submission of reports to Government at stated intervals as His Honor may wish.

"I may add, in conclusion, that the work is not Missionary work. The Bible and Christian Books are used only where they are specially asked for. In every other instance, the School Book Society's Books, or their own Native Publications, so long as they do not inculcate idolatry, are freely used."

#### MEMORANDUM.

Seven houses visited, in which sixty-seven women and girls, the inmates of fifteen houses, assemble, viz:—

Taltollah	1	House				1
Entally	2	Houses	•	The women from four of the		
				adjacent houses attend ..	Total	6
Puddopookur,	2	"	•	do. 1 do. ..	"	3
Eede's Lane	2	"	•	do. 3 do. ..	"	5
Schools	7			Houses contributing Scholars ..		15

These are splendid results of female energy. The educated native gentleman may well feel his blood tingle up to his ears at the constructive slur upon his manliness cast by the successful exertions of British Ladies in a cause towards the promotion of which he has as yet done little. The example however has been most enthusiastically taken up by one of our educated country-women. The name of Sremutty Bama-



soonderry Dabee of Pubna is a wide-spread one in Bengal. With a fund raised by the sale of her jewels—I need not say how dear to a Hindu lady who has always before her an appalling prospect of unfriended widowhood—and in the teeth of a violent opposition from the Orthodox community amongst whom her lot has been cast—the resolute daughter of Pubna, herself belonging to the highest braminical clan, maintains a school in her own Zenana which is a beacon light to all India. I wish the example were more thickly imitated all over the land.

The history of Mofussil female education is still cheering enough. The following statistics compiled from various sources will shew that ground has been broken in the good cause throughout the country.

From the latest Returns to which I had access I calculate that there are 11 Female Schools in the Lower Provinces of Bengal which are supported partly by Government and partly by the inhabitants themselves; in other words, on the Grant-in-aid system.

The details of the internal economy of these schools are so interesting that I cannot refrain from trespassing on your attention with them.

First then, in the 24 Pergunnahs there is a Girls' school at Mozilpore with 25 Pupils on its rolls. Its monthly expense amounts to Rs. 20, the expense of educating each girl falling at the rate of one rupee per head. In Baraset there are two Girls' schools, one at Nyhatty and another at Nibodia. The cost of these Schools amounts to Rs. 336 per annum for the

education of 36 girls, the average cost per head per month being Rs. 1-8 only.

In the Nuddea Zillah there are two Girls' schools, namely one at Nobodip and another at Kishnagore, in which the total number of pupils receiving education is 58. In the Hooghly District there are 3 schools, one at Gopalnagar and one at Konnagar, the total number of girls being 61. The school at Konnagar was established through the exertions of Baboo ~~Shib~~ Chunder Deb, who has lately retired from Government service after an honorable and meritorious career to devote his whole time to the furtherance of objects of social improvement. Konnagar a considerable populous village inhabited chiefly by men of respectable caste; and the existence of a female school in its very heart cannot but produce incalculable good. Of the 3 remaining schools there is one at Midnapore, one in Dacca and one in Jessore, in which the number of girls receiving instruction is 72.

The Ladies' Association in Edinburgh connected with the Free Church of Scotland now maintains in Calcutta, and in the neighbouring districts and villages, 11 Girls' schools in which 3 to 400 Girls are being educated. Among these I desire to bring prominently to your notice Dr. Duff's Hindu Girls' school in Manicktollah street. This school was established in 1857. It began with 10 or 12 girls. The number soon increased to 30 or 40, and for the last two or three years it has amounted to 70 or 80 with an average attendance of 50. Of the other 10 schools one is at Chinsurah with an average attendance of 25, one at Tribeni with an average

attendance of 30, two at Culna with an average attendance of 50 and five at Mohanad, west of Pandooah and the adjoining villages with an average attendance of 22 girls in each school.

Besides the schools enumerated above there are four Private Girls' schools, namely Rajahaut Girls' school in the 24-Pergunnahs, Baliadanga and Cassiadanga Girls' schools in Nuddea, and Ooterparah Female School in Hooghly. The total number of girls receiving instruction in them is 85.

To sum up these results, there are then in Calcutta and in the Mofussil 836 Girls receiving education at Public and Private seminaries.

It is ~~not~~ necessary for me to end this discourse with an appeal ~~to~~ the enlightened and liberal section of my countrymen on behalf of a cause which I know, instinctively remains ever next to their hearts. But every gentleman here present feels stingingly the absence of that combined and devoted action, without which no national good can be successfully achieved. We are convinced of the urgent need of a reform that shall render our homes intelligent as they are now sweet. We see clearly a destiny before us, bright and almost celestial. But the inertia of ages clogs our feet and paralyses our limbs. Sufficient moral courage exists in the country to enable it to defy the Shasters in matters in which the defiance is a vice rather than a virtue. But in a cause which the Shasters support, custom is shamelessly urged as a plea for cowardice. I will not however dwell long or bitterly on the subject of our shortcomings. The Law of Progression leaves little to be

done by passionate appeals. The very necessity and natural gravitation of the case will force on a measure without which the future existence of the nation will be a blight and a curse. If the need be real and the demand irresistible that intelligent men shall have intelligent wives, a predicate in which I am supported by the past history of civilisation, then female education in Bengal will soon grow up to a giant's height in spite of every obstruction.

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