

Student Movements in India during the Colonial Period

Neetu Dabas*

In the nineteenth century, several educational institutions were opened up by the colonial government. In 1817, the famous Hindu College of Calcutta was established. Later colleges were established in Bombay, Madras, Allahabad and Patna. Through these educational institutions students got acquainted with modern ideas. They started reading work of Bacon, Locke and Berkeley.¹ They began to reason, to question and to doubt. In this background a young professor HLV Derozio gathered a group of students who were radical in their thinking.

In 1828, HLV Derozio formed Academic Association which inspired many students for free thinking. Derozians wrote some of the finest poems dedicated to patriotism. They also raised their voice against orthodoxy of Hindu Religion. Due to their influence a few students left Hindu religion while others joined Brahmo Samaj to reform Hindu society. The ideas propagated by Derozians were radical. They openly started to criticise Hindu religion and defied orthodox practices. They were indulged in forbidden food and drink. At the time of prayers, they recited Illiad instead of chanting Mantras. Madhab Chandra Malik wrote in college magazine, "If there is anything we hate from our bottom of heart it is Hinduism"² Rasik Krishna Mallik said, "I do not believe in the sacredness of holy water of the Ganges."³ This hatred towards their own religion was neither inferiority complex nor was it the feeling of self-hate. They wanted to refashion a new self which had nothing to do with religious orthodoxy.

Derozio's political activities have also been seen as crucially important to the development of a public sphere in Calcutta during British rule.⁴ The Young Bengal was a group of

1 Rajimwale, A. (1988). Student Movement in India in the Nineteenth Century. pp. 344-348.

URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4414840>

2 Indian History Congress Proceedings Volume 49. (1989). The University of Virginia. p.345

3 Ibid

4 Chaudhuri, Rosinka (2010). *The Politics of Naming: Derozio in Two Formative Moments of*

**Assistant professor , Delhi University*