CHAPTER - III

INDIGENOUS VERNACULAR EDUCATION AND CHANGING PATTERN OF OFFICIAL POLICY

1. The state of Indigenous Elementary Education in the Early Decades of the 19th Century.

An idea about the pattern of Indigenous elementary education in the early decades of 19th century Bengal can be gleaned from the District Returns of 1801-2, the Reports of Dr. Francis Buchanan (1807-14) and the Survey of William Adam (1835-38). The District Returns were compiled by the District Judges and Magistrates in response to "Interrogatories" issued by the Judicial and Revenue Secretary George Dowdeswell on 29 October 1801 under the orders of Lord Wellesley.

The information, provided by the District Returns of 1801-2, is inadequate and scrappy in nature. Moreover, as pointed out by Walter Hamilton in his Gazetteer, "the returns to this were, with some valuable exceptions, rather hastily made and without due consideration of the subject, but it is remarkable that all these public functionaries, either from the fear of appearing to exaggerate, or from the novelty of the subject, kept greatly within the real amount."²

More detailed and authentic information on the state of indigenous education may be collected from the Reports of
Dr. Francis Buchanan who, under orders from the Court of Directors, carried out his "Statistical Survey" of several districts of Bengal, Bahar and Assam during the years of 1807-14. The system of popular education, as Dr. Buchanan surveyed, was a system of elementary education imparted through Bengali (or Persian in Maktabs) catering to the minimum needs of the rural folk of Bengal in the three R's and simple literary compositions, book-keeping and writing of petitions and letters. The preceptors of this rudimentary system of education were called "Gurus" who might belong to any caste or religion. They were "poorly rewarded" and "little respected". There was no public provision for their support and they were entirely dependent on the meagre tuition fees of scholars. The teachers of these Pathshala were, on an average, given a remuneration of 4 to 8 annas a month, which was a decent income in those days for the simple rural people.

Even these minimum educational benefits were confined to one-sixteenth of the people and women were totally kept out of these. This educational framework was, according to Buchanan not only defective for not being sufficiently broad-based, but was open to greater objections on account of lack of books to teach "moral doctrines or any liberal knowledge." The content of this education was strictly
limited to mere reading and writing of the common language of Bengal together with a smattering of arithmetic. The students read no books which contained modern scientific ideas, so that their education was entirely confined to accounts, book-keeping and some knowledge of fables and folklores. Buchanan, commenting on the vocational utility of indigenous education in the Pathsalas, said, "it is only the arithmetic, commercial and agricultural, that is taught at the Pathsalas, the applications to mensurations and to the keeping of books, either of a merchant or land-owner, are acquired in some office or shop into which the lad enters as an assistant, and where he also learns the style and manner of correspondence." Thus, the vocational usefulness of education imparted in the vernacular schools of villages, stands out as a redeeming feature of indigenous elementary education. This sort of education hardly improved their heart or enlarged their understanding. In the words of Dr. Buchanan, the indigenous system, because of its undue emphasis on accounts and lack of moral teaching, tended "rather to narrow the mind to confine its attention to sordid gain and low cunning than to improve the heart or enlarge the understanding." 5

This system of indigenous education is far more elaborately dwelt upon in the classic reports of Adam,
1835-1838, which threw new light on the various aspects of mass elementary education in Bengal. Bentinck directed Adam to enquire into the actual system of indigenous education as prevalent in the different parts of Bengal. This was considered to be the very first step to know "the actual state of Native education, that is, of that which is carried on, as it probably has been for centuries, entirely under Native Management." To accomplish this specific object, the choice fell on Mr. William Adam, a gentleman who possessed many natural qualities to undertake this onerous duty.

Adam, in his correspondence with Governor-General Bentinck, dated 2nd January 1835, had emphasized the need of an accurate picture of the structure of mass education, transmitted from time immemorial, familiar to the conceptions of the people, and inspiring them with respect and veneration in order to improve upon it on the basis of existing institutions. According to him, the only sure and true foundation on which any scheme of general or national education could be established was the traditional indigenous education. For this, it was necessary to map the moral and intellectual condition of the people so that we could understand the state of mass education and the means to be employed to accomplish it. "We may deepen and
extend the foundations, we may improve, enlarge and
beautify the superstructure, but these are the foundations
on which the building should be raised." Lord Bentinck,
in his minute dated 20 January 1835, urged the necessity
of finding out the existing state of instruction in
Bengal to gain a correct insight into the educational
system long cherished by the people, which could not be
thoroughly appreciated by an official survey without
exciting popular distrust requisite for the investigation.
Adam possessed all the qualities necessary to undertake
this delicate task by his considerable experience of
popular habits and his intimate knowledge of the language
and customs of the country where he came to reside for
more than seventeen years as a missionary.

Adam, in his report, noted a very remarkable fact
that in Bengal proper (Lower Province of the Bengal Presi-
dency), Bengali was "the language of the Musalman as well
as the Hindu population", and though Hindustani or Urdu
was the current spoken language of the educated Musalmans
of Bengal and Bihar, it was never employed in schools as
the medium of instruction. Bengali school-books written
by the Hindus of Bengal and Hindi school-books written by
the Hindus of Bihar were used both by Hindus and Musalmans.
Though Urdu was more copious and expressive and more
cultivated and refined than either, and possessed a richer and more comprehensive literature, Urdu school books were wholly unknown in Bengal. It thus appears that in the Province of Bengal proper, Bengali might justly be described as the universal language of vernacular instruction.  

Elementary indigenous education was very simple in organisation, methods of study, equipment and personnel. The teacher, usually called Pandit Mahashaya, established his school either on his own initiative or under the auspices of "princes, chieftains and opulent individuals, under the native governments". Ordinarily, the school house consisted of a small thatched mud-building covered with the leaves of palm and other trees. But in most cases, there was no school building built exclusively for the purpose of popular instruction; some meet in the Chandi Mandap, which is of the nature of a chapel belonging to some one of the principal families in the village, and in which, besides the performance of religious worship on occasions of great annual festivals, strangers also are sometimes lodged and entertained, and business transacted; others in the Doithakhana, an open hut primarily intended to be a place of recreation and of concourse for the consideration of any matter relating to the general interests of the village; others in the private dwelling of the chief supporter of the school; and
others have no special place of meeting, unless it be the most vacant and protected spot in the neighbourhood of the master's abode, such as the corner of a shop - the village temple, ... portico of a mosque, the verandah of a house or the shade of a tree.\textsuperscript{11}

From time immemorial, the teaching of the three R's had been considered the hereditary privilege of the Kayastha or writer-caste, and a Brahmin, Vaidya or Kshatriya was supposed to degrade himself in such occupation; while any of the castes inferior to the Kayastha acquired by the same means increased prestige. In Bengal this privilege of the Kayasthas' primacy over other castes had been largely challenged by castes both superior and inferior to them, but still they had a decided majority in the profession of teaching in the Vernacular schools. The following table, taken from Adam's reports, presents a comparison of the number of Kayastha teachers with that belonging to other castes.\textsuperscript{12}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total teachers</th>
<th>Writer-caste</th>
<th>Other castes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moorshidabad</td>
<td>67/</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deerbhoom</td>
<td>412/</td>
<td>256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burdwan</td>
<td>639/</td>
<td>369</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Behar</td>
<td>285/</td>
<td>278</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tirhoot</td>
<td>80/</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Another striking feature of the system, as prevalent in the districts of Bengal, was the gratuitous nature of instruction imparted by teachers. This worthy custom may be explained by the religious merit which was associated with the possession and diffusion of education. But still the humble nature of the monthly remuneration of teachers is particularly emphasized by Adam in the following table -

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Rs.</th>
<th>As.</th>
<th>P.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In the city and district of Moorshidabad</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the district of Birbhum</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the district of Burdwan</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the district of South Behar</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the district of Tirhoot</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It may well evoke surprise how, at such a low and disproportionate rate of remuneration, any human being, pretending to do the job of a teacher, could even in those days manage to put up a semblance of decency and social prestige.

Mr. Adam adds the following explanations - "it is possible that some sources of regular profit to teachers, in themselves insignificant, may have been overlooked; and occasional profits, such as presents from old scholars, are too fluctuating and uncertain to be known or estimated. Teachers, moreover, often add other occupations to that of
For emoluments so lean and so meagre, what qualifications could the teachers be expected to possess? The following is the observation made by Adam on the subject — "the teachers consist both of young and middle-aged men, for the most part simple-minded, but poor and ignorant, and therefore having recourse to an occupation which is suitable both to their expectations and attainments, and on which they reflect as little honour as they derive emolument from it. They do not understand the importance of the task they have undertaken. The traditional foundations of society had been rudely shaken. With all patronage withdrawn, and uncertain economic support rendering normal life impossible, the teachers did not have sufficient incentive for improvement." Thus, deterioration in educational standards, indicated by the type of teachers, was only an index of the prevailing social conditions.

It is at once interesting and important to have some idea about what classes and castes of the native community wished to confer the benefits of vernacular education on their children. The vast body of people in Bengal divided itself into Mohammedans and Hindus. The first question is, which of these two groups furnished proportionately the larger number of pupils. The Musalmans, compared with the
Hindus, had less education and social importance in the Bengali society. The relative numbers of Hindu and Musalman children in the elementary vernacular schools were in 1835-38:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Hindu</th>
<th>Musalman</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The city and district of Moorshidabad</td>
<td>998</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The district of Bhoran</td>
<td>6125</td>
<td>232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The district of Burdwan</td>
<td>12408</td>
<td>769</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The district of South Behar</td>
<td>2918</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The district of Tirhoot</td>
<td>502</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This gives us an idea of the proportion of Hindu scholars' overall majority in securing the benefit of an elementary education in relation to the numerical supremacy of Muslim elements in the general population of Bengal.

It becomes a matter of peculiar interest to ascertain what castes or classes of Hindu society secured the benefit of vernacular education. The following table of the castes of the Hindu scholars belonging to the city and district of Moorshidabad may, with certain variations, be viewed as an average specimen of the other parts of Bengal.
The City and District of Moorshedabad in 1835

(Composition of the different caste groups of Hindu Scholars)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Caste Group</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Caste Group</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brahman</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>Kayastha</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaivarta</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>Suvarnabenik</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gendhabanik</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>Tanti</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sunri</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>Teli</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mayra</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Kshetriya</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurmi</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Vaishnava</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamli</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Goala</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malo</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Napit</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vaidya</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Sutari</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cawal</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Swarnaker</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yugi</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Chhatri</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kesar</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Kumar</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rajput</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Kansya banik</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tili</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Aguri</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luniar</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Halweiker</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barayi</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Mali</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daibajna</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Chandal</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gaur banik</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Kandu</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kalawar</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Kayali</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sadgop</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Kehar</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jalia</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Lahari</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dagdhi</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Vaisya</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kalu</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Pashi</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gareri</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Dhoba</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keiri</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Muchi</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the three districts of Burdwan, Birbhum and Moorshidabad surveyed by Mr. Adam in Bengal proper, the number of Brahmin scholars greatly preponderated in two of them, Kayasthas stood next, and in a third nearly so; while in South Debar there were three castes, and in Tirhoot not fewer than seven castes, each yielding a greater number of scholars than the Brahmin caste, to which they were so greatly inferior in social estimation. Adam suggested that the manner of distribution of vernacular education among the different castes in the different districts indicated the strength and flexibility of native institutions and the relative social conditions of Hindus in different districts. According to him, Hindu society might be conveniently divided into three grades - Brahmins, the 1st grades were prohibited by the laws of religion from engaging in worldly pursuits; secondly, those castes who were specifically assigned by religion to carry on worldly employments and for whom vernacular teaching was not deemed unworthy; and third grades who were socially inferior both to Brahmins and Kayasthas but who had of late gained considerable importance in the job of vernacular teaching. It was also a clear indication of the significance of social change. Thus, writes Adam, "the time is not distant when it would have been considered contrary to all the maxims of Hindu civilization that individuals of Malo,
Chandul, Kahar, Jalia, Lahari, Bagdhli, Dhopa and Munchi castes should learn to read, write, and keep accounts;...

The encroachments of these castes on the outskirts of learning is a spontaneous movement in the native, the effect of a strong foreign rule unshackled by native usages and prejudices, and protecting all in the enjoyment of equal rights. 19

Mr. Adam, in estimating the nature of instruction offered in these schools, has drawn our attention to the important fact that "the use of printed books in the native language appears hitherto to have been almost unknown." Not only were printed books not used in schools, but in many places even manuscript text-books were unknown, and in all the districts, except Moorshedabad and Burdwan, the number of schools in which written works were not employed vastly exceeded the number in which they were employed. The teachers stocked into their brains all that they had to impart to their pupils by way of instructions, and urged their pupils to do the same. Originality in methods and subjects of study were not encouraged. For convenience of memory, poetry found greater favour as a staple subject and other subjects were versified, which accounts for the absence of prose literature in Bengali. 20

Apart from the rhyming arithmetical rules of Subhankar,
a writer whose name is as familiar in Bengal as Cocker in England, the scholastic compositions which found the greatest favour were extracts from the Puranas, such as a series of slokas after the name of Chanakya in praise of learning and morality, Ganga Dandana, describing the virtues of the river Goddess and some other well-known books like Gurudakhina, Gurubandana, and the Databarana.

Dr. Alexander Duff, in his criticism of the traditional scheme of teaching in village schools, described it as "dull, dry, plodding, monotonous mechanism" and the scheme of discipline as a reign of terror without a trace of kindness, patience and generosity. According to him, the vernacular school (Pathshala) was viewed by the Bengalee youth not as a place for healthy intellectual exercise, but as an awesome prison-house. Mr. Adam took a more favourable view of them in spite of some defects in the methods and equipments of teachers. "No one will deny that knowledge of Bengali writing and of native accounts, is requisite to the natives of Bengal, but when these are made the substance and sum of proper instruction and knowledge, the popular mind is necessarily cabined, cribbed and confined within the smallest possible range of ideas, and those of the most limited local and temporary interest, and it fails to acquire those habits of accuracy and precision which the exclusive
devotion to forms of calculation might seem fitted to produce. What is wanted is something to awaken and expand the mind, to unshackle it from the trammels of mere usage, and to teach it to employ its own powers; ... stimulating the mind to the increased observations and comparison of external objects, and throwing it back upon itself with a larger stock of materials for thought."  

11. Early Official Attitude to Indigenous Elementary Education.

'orientalist' bias in official education policy can be traced as early as the administration of Warren Hastings. His wide interests in oriental culture led to the foundation of Calcutta Madrasa in 1781 and the Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1785. This tendency was further strengthened by the establishment of Fort William College in Calcutta in 1800 for providing training to the young civilians of the East India Company coming from England to this country. Wellesley, in a Minute dated 18 August 1800, said that he "considered the establishment of such an institution and system of discipline, education and study to be requisite for the good government and stability of the British Empire in India." Under the original Regulations of the College,
every officer was required to undergo three years' training
during which he had to perfect himself in languages which
included Persian and one of the Vernaculars of the province
where he would serve after his training was over.26 "Lord
Wellesley appears to have been the first Governor-General
who appreciated the importance of a knowledge of the
Vernacular language by those who presided in the Civil,
Criminal and fiscal courts."27 Wellesley had done a great
service to the cause of Vernacular education by including
the study of Vernaculars in the curriculum of the Fort
William College.28

Governor-General Minto (1806-13), who recorded his
views on Indian education in a Minute29 dated 6 March 1811,
laid down the increasing awareness of the British rulers to
the educational problems of this country. Within two years,
Minto's views were given a concrete shape in the first
Parliamentary Legislation on Indian Education. The Charter
Act of 181330 was not much different from the views
expressed by Minto in his Minute. The Act envisaged a policy
of patronage towards the traditional classical learning
making no provision for the wider issue of mass-education in
the Vernacular.

The Court of Directors, in their Despatch of 3 June
1814, expressed "particular satisfaction" over "that
distinguishing feature of internal policy which prevails in some parts of India and by which the instruction of the people is provided for by a certain charge upon the produce of the soil and by other endowments in favour of the village teachers who are thereby rendered public servants of the community." They were full of praise for the Indian 'Pathshala' (village school) referring to which they said, "This venerable and benevolent institution of the Hindoos is represented to have withstood the shock of revolutions, and to its operation is ascribed the general intelligence of the natives as scribes and accountants." 

Lord Moira, (Governor-General, 1813-1823) was the first British Governor-General who took a comprehensive view of the entire educational issue. He tended to emphasize vernacular elementary rather than classical higher education, and the introduction of Western rather than the revival of traditional Indian learning. He discarded the policy which regarded the stability of British Empire as resting on the ignorance of Indian subjects - a policy which considered promotion of education among the Indian people as incompatible with the furtherance of imperial interests. As against such a narrow policy, he declared the urgency of "moral and intellectual improvement" of the people and expressed the definite view that "the first place" should be given to
"the humble but valuable class of village school masters.""

Observing on the useful role played by these humble men, Moira said, "these men teach the rudiments of reading, writing and arithmetic for a trifling stipend which is within any man's means, and the instruction which they are capable of imparting, suffices for the village zeminder, the village accountant and the village shop-keeper." 35

After a sound foundation had been laid in the schools, he would proceed to the next higher stage at which he contemplated "the establishment of two Government schools in each of the district headquarters." 36 To Rev. Thomas Thomason, the Chaplain of Hastings, must go the credit for devising the first detailed and comprehensive plan for education in Bengal Presidency, which he drew up with Hastings's encouragement early in 1814. It envisaged the establishment by Government of a high school in every district for the training of teachers, and the encouragement of elementary Vernacular schools in the villages. 38 In spite of Hastings' interest, however, it was not adopted by the Government, for a number of reasons including, probably, its cost and the fear of arousing the suspicions of the people on religious grounds, 39 it preferred instead to experiment on a limited scale with Rev. Robert May's methods around Chinsurah.

Rev. Robert May of the London Missionary Society had
started a group of elementary vernacular schools at Chinsurah.

He opened the first 'Native School' in his own house at Chinsurah on 4 July 1814, in order "to teach them (native boys) reading, writing and arithmetic in their own language"; it rapidly increased in numbers and by the end of June 1815 he had fifteen in and around the town, conducted according to a modified form of the monitorial system.

Judge Watson of Calcutta circuit paid a visit to May's schools at Chinsurah and recommended in his letter dated 6 June 1815 to the then Judicial Secretary W.B. Bayley as 'entitled to the entire approbation and support of a liberal and enlightened Government.' In 1815 Gordon Forbes, then British Commissioner for Foreign settlements, recommended May's schools to the Bengal Government for financial support, emphasising what he described as May's work might serve as a pilot project for general extension throughout the country. The Bengal Government responded by giving a monthly grant of Rs.600/- for the schools in 1815, increased to Rs.800/- in 1816, the first instance of Government support for elementary schools. W.B. Bayley in a letter, dated 11 June 1815, informed Gordon Forbes that the measures pursued by Rev. May appeared to the Vice-President-in-Council (N. Bimstone) to be in every respect satisfactory and to manifest a degree of prudence.
and judgement highly creditable to Mr. May'. Bayley further expressed the hope that "His Honour's desire that at a future period, these might serve as the basis of a plan for the more general instruction of Natives throughout the country." This was a clear proof that Government at this time was not against supporting a plan of National vernacular schools, but they were afraid of the financial burden of such a universal scheme.

Rev. May had increased the number of the schools to 36 by the time of his premature death in August 1818, with 3000 scholars. His successor, J.D. Pearson, who reduced them to 21 in 1823. In 1824 these schools were placed under the control of General Committee of Public Instruction. These schools were financially supported by Government but superintended by an L.M.s.Missionary - a partnership between Government and Missionaries continued until 1831, when Pearson died and Government took the opportunity of relinquishing the charge on 8 Nov. 1831 on the ground that the funds at the Committee's disposal should be "reserved for the support of considerable establishments and that its contribution to inferior ones should be as such as possible be discontinued."

After the departure of Lord Moira in 1823 from India, however, this pro-vernacular trend was not maintained, and
the few Vernacular schools, like the Chinsura schools and Calcutta School Society, which had been maintained on Government support during the Administration of Moira, were abandoned by the General Committee of Public Instruction. In 1818 the Calcutta School Society was founded (under the presidency of the Marquess of Hastings) with the following object: - "to assist and improve existing schools, and to establish and support any further schools and seminaries which may be requisite; with a view to the more general diffusion of useful knowledge amongst the inhabitants of India of every description, especially within the provinces subject to the Presidency of Fort William." In 1821, it had 115 Vernacular schools, containing 3,828 scholars under its patronage, viz., it gave books, examining and superintending the schools by its officers and agents. In 1 October 1823 they received a monthly grant of sissa Rs. 500 from Government, and worked admirably until 1833. The Court of Directors, while confirming this grant in their Despatch, dated 9 March 1825, expressed their high appreciation of excellent work done by the Calcutta School Society, particularly its efforts to improve the qualifications of the teachers of the indigenous schools.

The Government Resolution of 17 July 1823 had sought the General Committee's suggestions regarding the measures
to be adopted for the "introduction of useful knowledge" among the people and for the "improvement of their moral character." Various plans were put forward by the members of the General Committee for utilizing the limited funds of Rs.1 lakh at their disposal.

The first of these plans was submitted by H. Shakespeare in his Minute dated 6 September 1823. In this plan a graded system of Government schools was envisaged - one Vernacular school at every Police station at the bottom, two Vernacular schools at the headquarters of each District, and six such schools at six cities in which Provincial Courts of Appeal were situated. H. Shakespeare, in his Minute, observed that the plan was "well-calculated for the general diffusion of instruction" but that it should be "gradually promulgated and actually superintended."

A second plan came up before the General Committee through a Minute from Mr. J.H. Harington, dated 16 September 1823. This plan was originally sketched by Reverend Dr. Carey on 9 June 1814. In it Carey suggested that the educational grant of one lakh of rupees should be spent for achieving two objects, the establishment of a system of national education for the poor and establishment of seminaries and lectures for the purpose of teaching the
higher branches of science to the educated classes. Harington in his Minute proposed some modification of Carey's plan of education. He seems to have been an early advocate of the "Filtration" theory. Harington's idea was that education should be given to the selected few in English. These few would translate works of European knowledge into the Vernacular medium which would provide an opportunity to their countrymen to acquire a knowledge of European science and literature through their mother tongue. 56

Dr. H.H. Wilson, the Secretary of the General Committee, also circulated a "Note" 57 in which he explained the views of the members of the General Committee on the wider problem of Vernacular education of the people. His Note clearly shows that Wilson, like Harington, was influenced by the Filtration theory. Holt Mackenzie, another important member of the Original General Committee, wrote in his famous note, dated 17 July 1823, that "to provide for the education of the great body of the people seems to be impossible, at least in the present state of things." 58

The various educational plans indicated above represent two broad lines of thinking. On the one hand, there were advocates of Vernacular education like H. Shakespeare and Rev. Carey, who assigned an important place to the develop-
ment of village schools as the foundation of a national system of education. On the other hand, there were men like Harington and Holt Mackenzie, who advocated the introduction of European learning among the upper classes of society who would infiltrate the lower strata of society through an Anglo-Vernacular medium. They had no confidence about developing a sound system of education around the village schools then existing in Bengal.

The General Committee, under the influence of this idea of "filtration", withdrew the few grants which had been sanctioned during Lord Moira's administration and showed no enthusiasm for the diffusion of elementary education among the people. The General Committee's indifference to the cause of Vernacular education was proved by the withdrawal of Government patronage from the Chinsurah schools, because these schools did not fit in with their idea of education at that time. Similarly the General Committee rejected the petition of the Dacca School Society for financial help in 1826 which had opened 25 Vernacular schools around the City of Dacca.

Throughout the 19th Century, the Government had followed the policy that education and knowledge should descend from the higher strata of society to the lower, which was known as the doctrine of "Downward Filtration." A few
references may help us to clarify further the ideas associated with the "Downward Filtration" theory which influenced the contemporary official circles in England no less than in India. There is ample evidence to show that the Court of Directors fully concurred in General Committee's policy in refusing aid to Vernacular schools.

In the Public Despatch of 5 September 1827, the Court of Directors clearly indicated that higher education among the "superior and middle classes" was to be promoted in view of their useful role in the administration of the country. In a Public Despatch (No. 39) dated 29 September 1830, addressed to the Madras Government, the Court of Directors wrote, "the improvements in education, however, which most effectually contribute to elevate the moral and intellectual condition of a people, are those which concern the education of the higher classes; you would eventually produce much better and more beneficial change in the ideas and feelings of the community than you can hope to produce by acting directly on the more numerous class." The Despatch referred to above firmly expressed their lack of sympathy for the wider cause of Vernacular education of the people.

The Report of the General Committee of Public Instruction, 27 October 1831, significantly revealed its
attitude to Vernacular education what was to the effect in view of the limited means at the Committee's disposal and the inadequacy of any means to the education of a whole people rendering selection necessary, the Committee had always sought to teach the respectable in preference to the indigent classes.

Echoing similar sentiments Macaulay made the most famous declaration of the Filtration theory in government official circles in his Minute, dated 2 February 1835, "I feel with them that it is impossible for us, with our limited means, to attempt to educate the body of the people, we must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern - a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect." Another notable contributor to this line of thinking was Sir Charles Trevelyan. In his famous tract "on the Education of the people of India", he argued that, "the poor man is not less the object of the Committee's solicitude than the rich; but, while the means at their disposal were extremely limited, there were millions of all classes to be educated. It was absolutely necessary to make a selection, and they therefore selected the upper and middle classes as the first object of their attention,
because, by educating them first, they would soonest be able to extend the same advantages to the rest of the people."  

Auckland, who was Governor-General in the late thirties, observed: "The first step must be to diffuse wider information and better sentiments amongst the upper and middle classes, for it seems, as may be gathered from the best authorities on the subject, that a scheme of general instruction can only be perfect, as it comprehends a regularly progressive provision for higher tuition."

The unsympathetic attitude of the General Committee (then presided over by an ultra-Anglicist like Macaulay) towards indigenous Vernacular education is amply borne out by the reception which the Committee gave to the comprehensive plan of Adam for the improvement and extension of Vernacular education in Bengal. In the preface to his Report, Adam discussed the preliminary considerations which should be kept in view in drawing up a system of national education for this country. In his opinion, the fundamental principle of reconstruction should be the restructuring of indigenous elementary education. Despite many weaknesses, the indigenous elementary system had certain merits. It had the value of being the creation of the people; and for this reason it had a certain weight. Adam said that the
"foundations" of the national system should be "broad and deep" so that "all classes of institutions and every grade of instruction may be combined with harmonious and salutary effect." 68

Adam condemned the view that education should begin at the top and then filter downwards. "The primary objection to this plan is that it overlooks entire systems of native educational institutions, Hindu and Muhammadan, which existed long before our rule, and which continue to exist under our rule, independent of us and of our projects, forming and moulding the native character in successive generations." 69 In this connection, Adam referred to the views expressed earlier by Lord Moira in his Minute of 2 October 1815, 70 wherein he advocated a reform of the traditional system of village schools. The definite proposal that Adam made in this context, was "to lay the foundations of national education by improving and extending the system of Vernacular instruction, and to improve and extend that system, not by forming new and independent schools but by employing the agency of the long established institutions of the country." 71 The "leading idea" of his plan, as emphasized by Adam himself, was to transform the existing indigenous schools into "fit vehicles of national education" by means of appropriate improvements, and to
utilise (this) improved village schools as the means for bringing about "intellectual and moral improvement" of the Natives.

iii. Change in Official Attitude to Elementary Indigenous Education in Bengal. (1844-1853).

The existence of indigenous elementary schools ("Pathshalas") throughout the Lower province of Bengal was not unknown to Government; but instead of working upon them, attempts had been made, somewhat spasmodically, to help vernacular schools of a higher type as models. The failure of Government in effectively utilising the traditional "pathshalas" as the most suitable instrument for extending vernacular education required urgent re-thinking on their part. To Governor-General Sir Henry Hardinge belongs the credit of having made the first attempt in the direction of extending Vernacular mass-education in Bengal. In October 1844, he set up one hundred and one village schools in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, for imparting elementary instruction in the vernacular. The views of Government were explained in a letter to the Board of Revenue, dated 18 December 1844, under whose superintendence the schools were placed, the
most important parts of which are contained in the following extracts:

"The Right Hon'ble the Governor of Bengal has determined to sanction the formation of village schools in the several districts of Bengal, Behar and Cuttack, in which sound and useful elementary instruction may be imparted in the vernacular language." 75

Questions may be raised as to the motive behind the adoption of the Hardinge Resolution on Vernacular Schools in 1844. Dr. N.L. Basak, in his recent study, has observed that "the Hardinge Resolution had been adopted to counter the criticism that vernacular education had been neglected by Government and not out of any genuine conviction of the need for such a measure." 76 This view is also corroborated by the evidence which Dr. J.C. Marshman rendered before the Select Committee of Parliament on 16 June 1853. 77 Another contemporary testimony threw a flood of light on Government policy with regard to the Hardinge schools: these new schools were "designed for the instruction of those classes of the community whom our Anglo-Vernacular system of instruction did not reach." 78

The project did not meet with the desired measure of success, as the Government were not in a position to
supply the necessary books, teachers and supervisors, and before four years had passed, the Board of Revenue, under whose control the schools had been placed - reported that "the fate of Vernacular schools was sealed, and success was hopeless." 79

Since then little had been done by the Government towards promoting vernacular mass-education. It was left to the Lt.-Governor of North-Western Province, Sir James Thomason, 80 to show that education for the masses was not a utopian scheme. In 1843 the Educational Institutions of the North Western Provinces were separated from those of Bengal and placed directly under the Government of Agra; and Lt.-Governor Thomason turned his attention to the object of organising a system of Vernacular education. Sir G.R.Clerk, who was the Lt.-Governor of N.-W. Provinces before Thomason was convinced that a widespread network of indigenous schools already existed in the Province. "Every town in the Provinces has its little schools, he wrote in 1843, "in every Pergunnah are two or more schools, even in many villages is the rude school master to be found." 81 "The habits and customs of the influential classes in the North-Western Provinces cannot be judged of by those of people in Calcutta, Sir G.R.Clerk wrote, and declared that the attempt to force an impractical system of education on
the Natives of the Provinces is ... visionary, and productive only of an useless expenditure of the resources of Government." 82 James Thomason, who, with the influence of his father and his own personal experiences, had already become a champion of indigenous institutions, readily accepted this policy in its entirety. In a circular to District Officials issued in 1845, Thomason wrote that the means for educating the people were "at hand in the indigenous schools which are scattered over the face of the country. Their number may not at present be large, and the instruction conveyed in them is known to be rude and elementary. But these numbers may be increased and the instruction conveyed in them may be improved." 83 The report 84 of the spectacular success which had attended the Halkabandi system of Vernacular education, established by Thomason in eight 86 selected districts of the North-Western Provinces greatly impressed the authorities in the Lower Province of Bengal.

Dr. Moutat, the Secretary of the Education Council, was asked to proceed to the North-Western provinces in order to meet the Visitor-General, H.S.Reid 87 and to "examine into the nature of his operations." 88 Accordingly, Dr. Moutat visited the Normal School at Agra and several of the halkabandi schools in the districts of U.P. in the
winter of 1852. On his return, he submitted a report to the Council in which he expressed his views for solving the educational problems in Bengal. 89 In his Report 90 on Vernacular Education in the North-Western Provinces, 4 June 1853, Dr. Mouat referred to the "utter failure of the scheme of Vernacular education adopted in Bengal" and expressed his admiration at the real, solid advance and firm root taken by Mr. Reid's system which, in his opinion, "was not only the best adapted to leaven the ignorance of the agricultural population of the North-Western provinces," but which was "also the plan best suited for the Vernacular education of the mass of the people of Bengal and Behar." 91

Next Dr. Mouat, on behalf of the Council of Education, drew up a scheme for Vernacular education in Bengal and submitted the same to the Government in a letter dated 3 October 1853. 92 He admitted that the policy pursued so far had been "to concentrate the measures adopted for education to instruction in English for the higher classes and to form nurseries for the training of school masters and thus to raise up a class of educated Bengalees who would naturally and without any violent change displace by degrees the existing incompetent teachers." 93 Under this system, English education of the upper classes had been given precedence over everything else, and the wider cause of Vernacular education of the masses had been neglected.
He expressed the Council's view that "any scheme of Vernacular education for Bengal to be successful must be based upon the existing institutions of the country." Echoing Adam's views, he admitted that "the village school with all its imperfections, was a time-honoured institution" and the best means of rendering vernacular education generally acceptable, would be "gradually to improve the character and extend the benefits of the indigenous pathsalas." 

Dr. Mouat held the opinion that the quality of Vernacular education in Bengal could be improved through an extension of the system that had been successfully tried by the Calcutta School Society, namely, establishment in each district of model Vernacular schools, organisation of necessary staff for visitation and inspection of the existing Vernacular schools, providing facilities for the necessary instruction of masters, grant of rewards to the best pupils, and the supply of improved class-books to the schools. The idea was "thus gradually to introduce a uniform plan of a higher order, but strictly suited to the circumstances and requirements of the people, and to connect the whole with a more practical working of Lord Hardinge's Resolution of October, 1844." 

Dr. Mouat observed that, in the opinion of the
Council of Education, it was not immediately applicable to Bengal because here the revenue system was different and there were no subordinate officers corresponding to the Tehsildars in the Agra provinces. Nevertheless, the Council thought that "the leading features of that plan, namely, a general controlling authority, a subordinate visiting agency, the introduction of a better class of books and the suitable system of rewards for such indigenous schools as submit to inspection and visitation," were as applicable to Bengal as to the Agra districts.

The Council of Education finally submitted a scheme of Vernacular education, incorporating the main features of the Halkabandi system of Thomson and some principles which were applied with success by the Calcutta School Society. The concrete proposals which the Council thus put forward were:

(I) To try out the experimental plan in the four selected districts of Hooghly, Durdwan, Birbhum and Jessore.

(II) To provide in each Pergunnah School Vernacular instruction of the highest kind, comprising, besides the three R's, other liberal subjects like history, geography, geometry or elements of measurement of land.
(III) To make the Inspector's position analogous to that of the Visitor-General in the North-Western provinces by giving him full executive control, including responsibility for preparation of the necessary class-books.

(IV) To give a certificate of character and proficiency, signed by the Visitor-General, to every deserving pupil entitling him to a preference for Government employment.\(^98\)

Governor-General Dalhousie\(^99\) recommended to the Government of Bengal the system of Thomason and agreed with Dr. Mouat that "it was not only the best adapted to leaven the ignorance of the agricultural population of the North-Western provinces," but also the plan "best suited for the Vernacular education of the mass of the people of Bengal and Behar."\(^100\)

On receipt of the Minute of Dalhousie dated 25 Oct 1853, the Government of Bengal addressed a letter to the Council of Education, dated 19 November 1853, and requested the Council to furnish an outline of a plan, on the basis of information contained in the Reports of H.S. Reid and William Adam, "corrected" by experience gained from the past operations under the Hardinge Resolution, and to provide a sound and well-adapted system of Vernacular education in all the provinces under the Government.\(^101\)
The Lower Province of Bengal was placed directly under a Lt.-Governor on 1 May 1854 to cope with the urgent administrative needs of the vast province. The first Lt.-Governor of Bengal was Frederick James Halliday, who was a prominent member of the Council of Education before his appointment as Lt.-Governor. Lt.-Governor, after carefully studying the papers submitted by the Council of Education on 9 September 1854, came to the conclusion that the plan he had already proposed (he stated his views on vernacular education in a minute, 24 March 1854) was the best for the purpose and so he recommended it to the Governor-General for adoption. Reference should be made here to the "Notes on Vernacular Education," 7 February 1854, which Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar had addressed to F.J. Halliday. In his "Notes", Vidyasagar recorded his views on the subject of Vernacular education of the people which was "highly desirable on an extensive scale and on an efficient footing, "because it was by this means alone that the condition of the mass of the people could be improved." He emphasized the importance of the role of Superintendents and stated that by introducing the new class-books and by instructing the Cooroomchabosys about the mode of teaching, they would be able to turn the "worthless" pathsales into "useful institutions."
Mainly on the basis of Vidyasagar's "Notes", Halliday drew up his Minute of 24 March 1854, in which he declared that the object of Government should be to improve the vast number of indigenous schools which, on all evidence, still existed in the Province of Bengal.

Halliday proposed to establish a few Model schools in four selected districts of Bengal. If the Model schools would produce the "expected result in the improvement of indigenous education," the plan could later be extended to other areas more easily and economically. According to that plan, he recommended the establishment of 20 Model schools in the four districts of Bengal at an estimated annual cost of Rs.5250 per district inclusive of charges for rewards and the grant of a liberal allowance to the Head Superintendent for which post the name of Pandit Iswar Chandra Sharma was recommended in preference to a civilian. Following Reverend James Long's experiment at Thakurpukur, Halliday proposed to stimulate the improvement of existing village schools by attaching small rewards for the use of improved school-books in different subjects like History, Geography, Natural History, Grammar etc. Rev. J.Long championed the cause of Vernacular education in Bengal with an enthusiasm only equalled by William Adam in Bengal. With his headquarters at a place called
Thakurnukur (about 10 miles south of Calcutta), he organized a system of Vernacular schools around this centre under his personal supervision and provided a higher quality of instruction than what was attempted in the other Missionary schools of the same kind before him. In his Thakurnukur school instruction was imparted "through objects and pictures after Pestalozzian system." Instruction imparted in the school of Rev. Long was not simply of a theoretical nature, but it was "applied to actual purposes and pursuits of life," boys being required "to apply their knowledge practically through manual work in the gardens." Medium of instruction in all subjects except English was the Vernacular. Despite religious bias, Rev. Long's Thakurnukur experiment was a remarkable effort to organize a Vernacular schools with emphasis on practical activities now widely acclaimed as an essential part of elementary education.

The proposals of Halliday were debated by the Council members, who expressed conflicting views on the question of grant-in-aid to non-Missionary schools and on the suggestion to have a non-civilian as the Head Superintendent of Vernacular schools. In the end, the Council forwarded to the Bengal Government their entire proceedings with reference to the great question of Vernacular education (Letter dated
9 September 1854). Subsequently, Halliday's scheme of Model Schools received the approval of Government of India in February 1855, and it was introduced thereafter in four districts of Bengal, viz., Hooghly, Burdwan, Midnapore and Nadia under the Superintendence of Pandit Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar. 109

The Education Despatch of 19 July 1854 urged a greater emphasis on the much neglected vernacular mass education. The Despatch departed from the policy of encouraging higher education only among the upper classes in society and repudiated the filtration theory in its extreme form. The Despatch further wanted to create opportunities for "the acquisition of such an improved education as... would) make those who possess (es) it more useful members of society in every condition of life." 110 The higher classes were called upon to bear a considerable part of their own educational expenses, so that the funds thus released could be devoted to the hitherto neglected task of spreading "useful and practical knowledge, suited to every station of life, to the great mass of the people, who are utterly incapable of obtaining any education worthy of the name by their own unaided efforts." 111

The practice in Bengal had been so far to direct
students' ambitions to distinctions in European literature and philosophy. This reflected the Anglicist dream of providing a class of interpreters between the rulers and the ruled. Sir Charles Wood turned away from it, as suitable careers could not be provided for those who distinguished themselves. India needed "good clerks, railroad superintendents, civil engineers for irrigation works, policemen, village accountants and land-measurers." 112

Para 4 of the Despatch of 1854 clearly stresses that the energies of the students should be channelled into regenerating a backward economy by the development of the vast resources of the country. 113 Para 14 of the Despatch reads, "while the English language continues to be made use of as by far the most perfect medium for the education of those who have acquired a sufficient knowledge of it to receive general instruction through it, the Vernacular languages must be employed to teach the far larger classes who are ignorant of, or imperfectly acquainted with English." 114

The Despatch contained much that was under experiment in India, its major innovation in the sphere of Vernacular mass education was the grant-in-aid system, taken from Kay-Shuttleworth's theory and the English and Irish experience. Paragraph 52 of the Despatch commended the grant-in-aid
system as "fostering a spirit of reliance upon local exertions", 115 while paragraph 61 stated that the government would supply the wants of particular parts of India by the establishment of temporary support, and management of places of education of every class... 116

Wood looked forward to a time "when any general system of education entirely provided by Government may be discontinued... and when many of the existing Government institutions... may be safely closed, or transferred to management of local bodies." 117

The British authorities, through the Education Despatch of 1854, urged the Government of Bengal to adopt positive measures for developing a sound system of elementary education for the masses. The attention of the Government of Bengal should be seriously directed to the consideration of some plan for the encouragement of the indigenous schools, and for the education of the lower classes, which like that of Mr. Thomason in the North Western Provinces, may bring the benefit of education practically before them, and assist and direct their attention." 118

The Directors were aware that the particular object held out by the Agra Government to induce the agricultural classes to improve their education, did not exist in Bengal. Nevertheless, they were convinced that more or less on the
lines of North Western Provinces, "there may be found other similar solid advantages attending elementary knowledge which can be plainly and practically made apparent to the understanding and interests of the lower classes of Bengal."^119A

The Despatch gave a great impulse to the expansion of mass education in India. In January 1855, a start was made in carrying out its provisions in Bengal by the formation of Education Department in succession to the Council of Education.\(^119B\) Although a Director of Public Instruction was appointed, Lt.-Governor F.J.Halliday felt that he could not do without the help of a man of Vidyasagar's ability, if the scheme of Vernacular mass-education was to be a real success.\(^120\)

The Government of India, in its letter No. 317 dated 13 February 1855 addressed to the Government of Bengal, did not object to the employment of Pandit Iswar Chunder (Sharma), in occasionally inspecting the Vernacular Schools in Bengal,\(^121\) but the terms of the Court's Despatch would not allow of his being made a Superintendent of Vernacular Education. Vidyasagar was, however, appointed an Assistant Inspector of Vernacular education on 1st May 1855.

Vidyasagar, with the help of his Sub-Inspectors, \(^122\).
adopted various measures to introduce the scheme of Model Vernacular schools into the Districts of Midnapore, Burdwan, Hooghly and Nadia. His first measure was to instruct his Sub-Inspectors to visit the interior of the respective districts under their charge to find out suitable towns and villages for the Model schools. He further selected 92 teachers out of a large number of intending candidates at a monthly salary of Rs. 7/-.

He further directed the attention of the government to the necessity of bringing out cheap editions of school books and to compile new books for beginners. By January 1856, the Pandit was able to provide each of the districts in his charge with its full complement of five schools at a monthly expenditure of Rs. 50 each.
### Vernacular Model Schools set up by Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar (Sept. 1855 - Jan. 1856)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Location of the Village</th>
<th>Established on</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nadia</td>
<td>Maheshpur school</td>
<td>1 Sept. 1855</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bhajanghat &quot;</td>
<td>4 &quot; &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kusda &quot;</td>
<td>4 &quot; &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kantura &quot;</td>
<td>11 &quot; &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Debagram &quot;</td>
<td>12 &quot; &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burdwan</td>
<td>Amadpur &quot;</td>
<td>26 Aug. 1855</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jowgong &quot;</td>
<td>27 &quot; &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Khandghose &quot;</td>
<td>1 Sept. 1855</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mankar &quot;</td>
<td>3 &quot; &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dinehat &quot;</td>
<td>29 Oct. 1855</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hughli</td>
<td>Harope &quot;</td>
<td>28 Aug. 1855</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Shiahkala &quot;</td>
<td>13 Sept. &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Krishnagar &quot;</td>
<td>28 &quot; &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kamarpukur &quot;</td>
<td>&quot; &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Khirpai &quot;</td>
<td>1 Nov. 1855</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(subsequently transferred to Dandipur)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midnapur</td>
<td>Gopalmagar &quot;</td>
<td>1 Oct. 1855</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dasudebnur &quot;</td>
<td>&quot; &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Malancha &quot;</td>
<td>1 Nov. 1855</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pratappur &quot;</td>
<td>17 Dec. &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jueknur &quot;</td>
<td>14 Jan. 1856</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The model schools at once became popular and a serious inconvenience was soon felt at some of the schools where pupils flocked in large numbers. Vidyasagar was, therefore, obliged to represent to the Director the urgent necessity of employing additional teachers. After some hesitation, the Government accepted an additional outlay of Rs.90 per month and the remainder of the additional expenses would be met from school fees. Some three years after the commencement of the operation, he was able to present a very favourable report to the Director, from which we quote the following:—"It is now about three years since our operations commenced and the Model Vernacular schools have been established. During this short period, the progress of these institutions has really been very satisfactory."

In Bengal no fixed system was adopted, but various schemes were set on foot in the different parts of the Lieutenant-Governorship, with the object of promoting Vernacular education. In 1855, H.Woodrow, the Inspector of Schools in Eastern Bengal, introduced the system of "Circle Schools" under which one superior teacher visited a group of village schools in turn. "The principle of his plan was to make use of the existing indigenous schools, and he proceeded by forming these schools into circles of three, four, or five, and attaching to each circle a well qualified
teacher, to be paid by Government, whose duty it would be to go from school to school, instructing village schoolmasters in their duties, and imparting instruction in the higher subjects to the more advanced pupils; encouragement being given to both masters and pupils by the prospect of small pecuniary rewards.

The plan of circle schools which was introduced in Bengal in 1855, was adopted in the following districts: Nadia, Burdwan, Hooghly, Midnapore, 24 Parganas, Barasat, Jessore and Dacca. "The most promising schools in the 24-Parganas, Barasat, Jessore and Dacca, have been formed into sets or circles of 3, 4 or 5, according to circumstances; and to each circle is attached a qualified teacher who is paid by Government Rs.15 a month, and who goes about from one school to another instructing the "Gooroomohashoys" in their duty and the more advanced boys of each school in the higher subjects of instruction."

"The plan of Mr. Woodrow for the improvement of the indigenous vernacular schools in his division is based on the retention of the existing schools." The Court of Directors thus approved Mr. Woodrow's plan and advised "to avoid as much as possible the supersession of the former teachers of indigenous schools, which seem... to have naturally a considerable hold on the minds of the people."
The following extract from the Report of 1858-59 shows the extent to which these plans had been carried out at that time: "There have been established 55 circles, embracing 158 indigenous schools established in four districts; and there have been 12 itinerant teachers employed in schools in six other districts. In six districts payments have been made to indigenous school teachers for improvement of their pupils, at the rate of one Rupee a month for every ten boys under instruction; besides rewards for success given to each teacher in eleven other districts." In the Report of 1859-60, there was precise information about 147 indigenous schools under improvement with an attendance of 8707. The object of establishing these circles was to disseminate the blessings of education among the mass of population without incurring a heavy expense. A circle teacher was appointed not for teaching hundreds of boys, but for instructing the higher classes in those subjects of useful study, of which the Guru was ignorant, and to direct the Guru in his studies and in training his boys properly. The Guru had the sole charge of the Patshala, to which it was intended by these means to impart a higher and better tone.

"The Second great Despatch on education, that of 1859, reviews the progress made under the earlier Despatch, which it reiterates and confirms with a single exception as
to the course to be adopted for promoting elementary education." The Despatch of 1859 recorded that no general scheme of popular education suitable for all parts of India could be framed, but it was most important that the greatest possible use should be made of the existing schools and of the masters to whom, however inefficient as teachers, the people had been accustomed to look up with respect. It also observed that the grant-in-aid system, as hitherto in force, was unsuited to the dissemination of Vernacular education among the masses of the population.

The Despatch, therefore, strongly recommended that means of elementary education should be provided by the direct instrumentality of the officers of Government. Lord Stanley's despatch led to enquiries into vernacular Education on the part of the India Government. On 17 May 1859 the Supreme Government asked Sir J.P. Grant, the Lt.-Governor of Bengal, for his views on the subject of improving and extending vernacular mass education.

Before forming his own opinion, Grant consulted not only the prominent officials of the Education Department but several other gentlemen, both European and Indian. Among the Indians consulted were Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Debendranath Tagore, Raja Radhakanta Dev, Peary Chand Mitra,
Rev. K.M. Datta and Shyama Charan Sarker. Among the European officials who took active part in this were the following: W. Seton-Karr, Judge of Jessore; Dr. Mouat, the Secretary of the Council of Education; and Major Lees, Acting D.P.I. 140

Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar's realistic appraisal of Government attitude to mass-education was very much illuminating. "In my humble opinion", Ishwar Chandra states that, "it seems almost impracticable, in the present circumstances of the country, to introduce any system of education with such limited expenditure as is contemplated by government, viz. Rs. 5 to Rs. 7 a month for... each school." "But I must remark that such education, insignificant as it would be, will not extend to the masses, if by that word is meant the labouring class... It is too much to expect that they would educate their children merely for the sake of knowledge... The Government should confine itself to the education of the higher classes." 141 Another prominent public figure of the then Bengali society - Debendranath Tagore 142 was invited by Lt.-Governor J.P. Grant to offer his suggestions regarding the best means of extending Vernacular mass education in Bengal. Debendranath, in his letter of 8 August 1859 to the Government of Bengal, submitted the following plan: - To place the traditional
Pathshahals on an improved footing, the teachers should qualify themselves for their duties by an adequate course of instruction. Normal schools should be set up for the instruction of teachers. A uniform set of good text books should be introduced. Though there was no scope for the introduction of Halkabandi system, adequate supervision on the part of Government seemed essential for the success of Vernacular mass-education. The course of study should be such as to bring some practical benefit to the pupil. 143

Raja Radhakanta 144 Deb wrote 9 July 1859: "Nothing should be guarded against more carefully than the insensible introduction of a system whereby, with a smattering knowledge of English, youths are weaned away from the plough, the axe, and the loom, to render them ambitious only for the clerkship for which posts they would desire the Government and Mercantile offices, and the majority being disappointed, would be unable to return to their trade, and would necessarily turn vagabonds." 145

Peary Chand Mittra 146 wrote 8 July 1859: "I would suggest that, if arrangements can be made for instructing the pupils of village schools in practical agriculture and horticulture, it will not only conduces to the improvement of the material condition of the people, but serve substantially the cause of popular education which the Government
is so anxious to promote." What the village school pupils should learn must be practical and not from books. This instruction I submit should be on manures, nature of soils required for different kinds of grafting, modes of germination, successful growth, preservation, etc.\textsuperscript{147}

The Rev. Krishna Mohan Banerjee expressed his opinion 11 July 1859: - "A ryot, that can read and write may be able to sign his own name in his koboolut after reading it himself, may examine the pattah or the daakhila granted to him and the entries made in the Zamindar's books when he takes izarah or pays rent, may when wronged write out an application to the proper authority without the intervention of a Court sharper in the form of a professional scribe, may read for himself depositions taken in his name and affix his own signature, and in various other ways check the delinquencies of oppressors, forgers and perjurers."\textsuperscript{143}

Mr. Mowat, so long the able Secretary of the Council of Education, stated: - "The existing village schools" are old-established, time-honoured Institutions, deeply grafted in the affections of the people, intimately connected with their habits and associations, and so closely interwoven with their prejudices and predilections, that any attempt to displace them with more highly organized schools
and better trained school-masters will result, as all such attempts have heretofore resulted, in hopeless failure."149

W. Seton-Karr, Judge of Jessore, remarked 5 July, 1859:— "I think that we cannot be far wrong if we enable a ryot to write a letter of business or congratulation to his patron or friend, to draw out a bond, to understand the terms of a mortgage, to cast up his accounts, to know if his receipts for rent are correctly signed, and to understand the scope of Act X of 1859."150

In 1860, Sir J. Peter Grant, Lt.-Governor of Bengal, submitted his plan of Vernacular mass education, 19 October 1860 to Government of India, the main features of which may be summarised in the following terms:—

1) It was in the first place to be emphasized that the agricultural peasantry of Bengal was the class to be acted upon;

2) Secondly, the standard of instruction to be imparted should be not higher than that provided by the ordinary indigenous schools (pathshalsas) already in existence in large numbers over the whole country;

3) Thirdly, the Inspectors should try to make the Gurus, or the patrons of these schools, to submit to periodical inspection;
4) Fourthly, the government should undertake the responsibility of supplying uniform sets of good text-book at a low price containing all the necessary elements of instruction for the rural people, namely, Arithmetic, Agricultural and Commercial Accounts, Forms of Agreements, Bonds, and even models of complimentary or formal letters. The course of study would be such as to enable any lad of ordinary intelligence to guard himself against fraud, malpractice usually committed by the mahajan or the agent of the Zamindar. 151 "If the time should ever arrive when we could show one thousand village schools to a district, aided by Government, and affording the agriculturists a simple and practical education commensurate with their wants, the state, in such a case, might be held to have fairly done its duty by a neglected portion of its subjects."

In spite of the exhortations of the Home Authorities 152 for a new turn in official attitude to mass education, the policy of the Provincial Government in Bengal continued to be dominated by the 'Anglicist' bias. As H.A. Stark remarked in this connection, "The Bengal Government remained impenitent and unconvinced." 153 A few half-hearted and hasty measures were tried now and then to bring about some improvement in the stagnant vernacular indigenous Patshals.
However, due to lack of seriousness of purpose on the part of the authorities, no wide system of mass education was evolved in Bengal till after the lapse of another two decades. Other chief features of indigenous vernacular education in the middle of the 19th century in Bengal were the existence of Circle Schools, Model Vernacular Schools, Grant-in-aid Schools and Guru Schools. With the exception of the Guru Schools, the existing system does not tap the masses; it was adopted chiefly by boys of the middle classes; it exhibits but a slow tendency to work downwards and expand itself towards the millions; it embraces but a fraction of the population, leaving the agricultural and working classes in the main as ignorant as ever.

The fundamental weakness of government policy with regard to the vernacular indigenous education system was that it ignored the traditional Pathshalas as the main basis of mass education in Bengal. In the second and third decades of the 19th century some attempts were made to fit the traditional Pathshalas with the new educational system. But they became so wornout and effete that there was no trace of life which might guarantee any chance of success. As a result of long years of neglect, the net-work of traditional Pathshalas, instead of
being a source of strength, became the main barrier which stood in the way of any reform of vernacular mass education in Bengal.


3. Dr.Francis Buchanan's statistical survey were edited and published, under Govt. authority, by Robert Montgomery Martin in 1838 as History, Antiquities, Topography and Statistics of Eastern India in three volumes.


26. Marshall, G.T. - 'Rules & Regulations of the College of Fort William' -


32. Ibid.


37. Rev. Thomason was the father of James Thomason who was the first Lt. Governor of North Western Provinces and attained fame by organising the Hulkabandi System of Village schools.


40. Proceedings of General Committee of Public Instruction (1823-30), P. 514.

41. A.B.Dobbs, Education and Social Movements, London, 1919, P.149-52. The Monitorial system was developed
during 1790 by Dr. Andrew Bell and Joseph
Lanenster on the model of 'Sardar Podo' system
of Indian Pathsalas.

42. Judicial (Criminal) Progs. No.1, 13.6.1815.
43. Judicial (Criminal) Progs. No.9, 11.7.1815.
44. Judicial (Criminal) Progs. No.4, 6, 6th Sept.1815.
45. Judicial (Criminal) Progs. No.9, 11 July 1815.


48. General Committee of Public Instruction No. 1310 - 1313, 18.1.1832.

49. Resolution adopted in the First General Meeting, dt.


56. Ibid.


59. The theory of Downward Filtration assigned top priority to the higher education of the upper classes in preference to the elementary education of the people which should follow through filtration from the former.


64. 'Trevelyan - "on the Education of the people of India", Page-48.

65. Auckland, George Eden, Earl of (1784-1849) : Governor-General 1836-42. Second son of the first Lord Auckland. Created Earl in 1839. Though his rule in India was chiefly associated with Afghan affairs, his Education Minute of 1839 meant a compromise between rival claims of the Anglicist and Orientalist.


72. Improved vernacular schools under Rev. May and Pearson at Chinsurah 1814-32, under Captain Stewart at Burdwan 1816-20, Baptist Missionary Society at Serampore 1800-1835, and under Calcutta School Society 1818-35 were occasionally assisted by Government.

73. Hardinge, Henry, First Viscount of Labore (1785-1856); Gov-General 23 July 1844 - 12 January 1848; created Viscount Hardinge 2 May 1846; His administration in India is especially associated with Anglo-Sikh War.

74. Richey, J.A., op. cit; Letter from Under Secretary to the Govt. of Bengal to the Sudder Board of Revenue, 18 Dec. 1844., P.82-86.

75. Richey, J.A., op. cit, P.82-83.

76. Mr. N.L.Dasak; History of Vernacular Education in Bengal (1800-1854) - A review of the early trends and experiments, Cal. 1874, P.393.


78. J.Kerr, op. cit, P. 158.
Thomason, James (1804-1853) was the son of the Rev. Thomas Thomason, a Chaplain to the Governor-General Lord Moira. He is known to have drawn up a detailed scheme for the education of the people blending Oriental culture with Western Knowledge and ideas. It shows the type of atmosphere in which James Thomason was brought up. He joined the Bengal Civil Service in 1822 and was appointed Secretary to the Government of Agra in 1837. It was here that he obtained his real insight into the condition and life of the people - a knowledge that stood him in such good stead later on. He was elevated to the office of Governor of the N.W. Provinces in 1843 which he held with rare distinction until his death in 1853. His term of office was remarkable for his success in developing communications, in improving the police and gaols, in promoting popular education, and in carrying out improvements in every branch of the public service.

Richey - op. cit., Letter dt. 3 Aug. 1843 from the Govt. of N.W. Province to Govt. of Bengal, P. 234.
82. Richey - op. cit, P. 235.
83. Richey, op. cit, P. 237.
84. Richey, J.A., op. cit, Letter, dated 18 Nov.1846 from the Government, North Western Provinces, to the Govt. of India.

85. The system of Halkabandi or Circle schools had been devised for the "special purpose of meeting the wants of the agricultural population. The halkabandi or primary Vernacular schools which now through the North-Western Provinces in thousands originated about 1851 in an experiment made by Mr.Alexander, Collector of Muttra. A pargannah being chosen, it was ascertained how many children of a school-going age it numbered what revenue it paid, and what expense it could therefore bear. A cluster of villages, some four or five, was then marked out and the most central of the villages fixed upon as the site of the school. The rate-in-aid originally varied a good deal in different districts, but ultimately the Zamindars agreed to contribute towards education at the rate of one per cent on their land revenue. Mr. Alexander's idea was quickly caught up by other Collectors and in 1853, Agra, Bareilly, Etah, Etawah, Mainpuri, Muttra and Shahjahanpur all had a certain number of halkabandi schools, and at the close of 1854 there
were about 17,000 pupils receiving education in them."


87. H.S. Reid : Visitor General of the North-Western Provinces Schools, 1850-54. First Director of Public Instruction, North-Western Provinces.


89. Ibid, No. 127, Dt. 24.11.1853.


91. Selections from the Records of Bengal Govt. No. XXII, (Correspondence relating to Vernacular education in the Lower Provinces of Bengal), Calcutta, 1855. P.12.


93. Selections from the Records of the Bengal Govt., No. XXII, Calcutta, 1855. Letter of F.J. Mouat, Secretary, Council of Education to Cecil Beadon, Secretary to
the Govt.of Bengal, op. cit. P. 29.

94. Selections from Records of the Bengal Govt., No.XXII, Calcutta, 1855. Letter of F.J.,Mouat, Secretary, Council of Education to Cecil Beadon, Secretary to the Govt.of Bengal, P. 32.


99. Dalhousie, James, Andrew, Brown-Pemsey - First Marquis of Dalhousie (1812-60) - Governor-General from Jan. 1848 to Feb. 1856. His administration was as much admired for many-sided reforms as was criticised for carrying out too radical socio-economic reforms which was held to be a cause of the Mutiny of 1857.


Selections from the Records of the Bengal Govt. No. XXII, Calcutta, 1855.
102. Halliday, Sir Frederick James (1806-1901) - Offg. Sec. to the Govt. of India, 1842; Secy. to the Home Dept. of the Govt. of India, 1849; Member of the Gov-General's Supreme Council, 1853-54; the first Lt. Governor of Bengal from May 1, 1854 to May 1, 1859. He was acclaimed by Lord Dalhousie and had great influence with Lord Canning, who said of him after the Mutiny that for many months he had been the "right hand of the Govt." His term of office as Lt. Governor was eventful.

103. Extracts from Letter No. 525, dated 16 Nov., 1854 from the Govt. of Bengal, to the Govt. of India, selections from the records of the Bengal Govt. No. 22. Correspondence relating to Vernacular education in the Lower Provinces of Bengal, Cal. 1855, p. 65-71.

104. Ishwar Chander SMOOTH'S Notes on Vernacular Education, 7 February 1854, enclosed in Hodgson Pratt, Under-Secretary to the Government of Bengal, to Under-Secretary to Government of India (Home Department), 16 Nov. 1854, which gives in extenso Halliday's Minute of 24 March 1854. Halliday states, "I append a memorandum on the subject, drawn up by the energetic and able Principal of the Sanskrit College, who, as is well-known, has long been zealous in the cause of Vernacular education, and has done much to promote
it, both by his improved system in the Sanskrit college and by elementary works which he has published for the use of schools.

Selections from Bengal Records Vol. XXII, P. 71-74.


106. Selections from the Records of Bengal Govt. No. XY, Calcutta, 1855, P. 66.


110. The Despatch of July 19, 1854, para 42.

111. Para 41.


116. Richey, op. cit., P. 381.

117. Richey, J.A. - op. cit, Despatch (No. 49) of 19 July 1854 P. 364-393.

118. Ibid, Despatch of 1854 (No.49), Para 41.


122. The Sub-Inspectors were Harinath Banerjee, Madhab Chandra Goswami, Tarasankar Bhattacharyya and Vidyasagar's second brother Dinabenabhu Nayaraina.

123. Ed. Con. 1 Nov. 1855, No. 51A Ishwar Chandra Sharma to Gordon Young, D.P.I.


125. Ed.Con. 24 Jany. 1856, No. 82, 13 March 1856, No.77.


129. Despatch of 1854, Para 21, P. 433.


131. Ibid - Despatch dt. 18 Feb (No. 5) 1857 from the Court of Directors, P. 104.


139. Ed. Proceedings, 23 June, 1859 (No.1) From W. Grey, Secretary to the Govt. of India, Home Dept., to E.H. Lushington, Offg. Junior Secretary to the Govt. of Bengal, (No.1021, dated 17 May 1859).

140. Education Proceedings, Dt. October 1860, No. 35-61.

141. Ed. Dept. Proceedings, Oct. 1860, No. 53 - From Ishwar Chandra Sharma to Rivers Thompson, Jt. Secretary to the Govt. of Bengal, dt. 29 Sept. 1859.

142. Tagore, Debendranath (1818-1905) son of Prinsep Dwarkanath; educated at Hindu College, joined Brahma Samaj, 1842 and revived moribund Brahma Samaj into a powerful force in Bengali society.


144. Radhakanta Deb (1783-1867) grandson of Maharaja Nabakrishna Deb, the Persian Secretary to Lord Clive; ever ready to promote the cause of both vernacular and English education, he was active in diffusing English education as Manager of Hindu College (1818-50) and as Indian Secretary of Calcutta School Society (1818-34) for the cause of Vernacular education. Aware of the importance of the study of
science, he supported the cause of the establishment of Medical College in 1835 and took active part in the workings of the Agricultural and Horticultural Society of India. He was member of the General Committee of Public Instruction 1835-37, 1841-44 and in 1859 the Bengal Government sought his opinion on Lord Stanley's proposal that Vernacular should be made the medium of mass education. He also took keen interest in female education and agreed to support Calcutta Female School, opened by J.S.D. Bethune on 7 May 1849 on condition no attempt was be made to preach Christianity.


146. Mitra, Peary Chand (1814-83), Educated at Hindu College, Secretary, Society for the Acquisition of General Knowledge, 1838; one of the founders of the British Indian Association; Member, Bengal Legislative Council, 1867.


151. Adam, op. cit. (Ed. Proceedings, Oct. 1860, No. 64, From W.S. Seton Kerr, Off. Secretary to the Govt. of Bengal, to W. Gray, Secretary to the Govt. of India, Home Dept. (No. 633, dated the 19 Oct. 1860).


154. It was during the Lt. Governorship of Sir George Campbell (1871-74) that the Provincial Govt. sanctioned the sum of Rs. 400,000 for the development of elementary education in Bengal on the basis of the neglected indigenous schools.

155. These are the old indigenous schools of the country, fragments remaining of the ancient village municipal system, the village having the Guru, the same as it has its barber or smith.