CHAPTER V

Growth of a sense of responsibility for Vernacular mass education.

1. The early pioneers of Vernacular education.

The position of the vernacular language in relation to the general system of education in Bengal is a matter of vital importance. In the Despatch of 1854 the Home Government expressed the opinion that for the dissemination of general education to the great mass of the people Vernacular must necessarily be used as a medium, while for the spread of a high order of education in the science and literature of Europe it was equally necessary that the English language should be the medium. Long before the official acknowledgment of the importance of Vernacular as the medium of mass education, an evil tendency had shown itself especially in the immediate vicinity of the Presidency town of Calcutta to substitute the study of the English language for the acquisition of general knowledge through the Vernacular.

We have used here, as before, the expression "Vernacular education" in a general way to describe the elementary education of the masses who had neither the leisure nor the resources necessary to avail themselves of the facilities of English education which were placed by the authorities at the disposal of the upper and middle classes of society. A writer dilating on the
Government's attachment to education of the upper middle classes and comparative failure to uphold the cause of Vernacular mass education, wrote in this vein: "It has been said, do nothing to enlighten the masses, till you give a high education to a number, and this will educate the masses - we do not object to the former, but we would not postpone the latter to an indefinite period." "The Government began in 1836 with educating the few, - is not the time now arrived, in 1854, after lapse of twenty years, for not ending there, but extending education to the many?" 3A

It was a principle with the East India Company to respect the Indian religions. Not only did it abstain from missionary activity, it discouraged private missionary enterprise by every means in its power. The East India Charter Act of 1813 contained the famous 43rd clause which enjoined that "measures ought to be adopted as may tend to the introduction among them of useful knowledge and moral improvement. That in furtherance of the above objects sufficient facilities shall be afforded by law to persons desirous of going to, or remaining in India for the purpose of accomplishing those benevolent designs." 3B

The early pioneers of vernacular education in Bengal, Mr. Robert May, Dr. J. Marshman, Dr. W. Carey and Capt. J. Stewart set up elementary schools in order to gain some influence over the non-Christian people for their ultimate aim of propagation of Christianity. These missionary pioneers Robert May, Captain
Stewart and the Serampore trio played the most notable part in the development of Vernacular mass education. Mr. Charles Lushington describes Mr. May's success in this way: "At the beginning of July 1814, this benevolent and meritorious individual, while residing at Chinsurah as a Dissenting Minister, with a very narrow income opened a school in his dwelling house, proposing gratuitously to teach the natives reading, writing, and arithmetic... In January 1815 Mr. May opened a village school at a short distance from Chinsurah, and in the following month of June he had established 16 schools, including the Central one at Chinsurah, to which 951 pupils resorted." 

The work of improved vernacular education was begun in Burdwan under the superintendence of Captain J. Stewart in 1816 by establishing two Vernacular schools. In 1818 the number increased to ten containing a thousand children. Stewart carried out the system of Robert May of Chinsurah with improvements of his own. Stewart knew Bengali perfectly well and composed several elementary text books - "Barnamala", "Updeekatha" and "Tamonasak". His regular course of study included bits of knowledge of Western Science and other allied information together with the outlines of the Company's Regulations. The Calcutta School Book Society gave the following information in its First Report (23rd December 1818): "A set of elementary Bengali Tables, with short reading lessons intermixed by Lt. J. Stewart, Adjutant of the Provincial Battalion of Burdwan." 

"The Serampore missionaries stood almost alone in
advocating a Vernacular education as the only means by which the
great body of the people, who had no leisure for the acquisition
of a foreign language, could be rescued from ignorance and
superstition." The missionary plan of Vernacular mass education
received a valuable impetus with the publication of Dr. Joshua
Marshman's minute of 1813. Dr. Joshua Marshman's "minute",
addressed to Rev. Fuller in England soon after the passing of the
Charter Act of 1813, containing as it did a "scheme for Lancas-
trian schools among the heathens", was the earliest document in
which a systematic plan of elementary education had been drawn up
for this country. Joshua's son Rev. J.C. Marshman called this
minute "remarkable for its advocacy of vernacular education for
the masses and many of the principles which were afterwards laid
down in the Despatch of 1854 A.D." Joshua Marshman further
improved on his original plan of 1813 in his famous pamphlet
entitled "Hints relative to native schools" in 1816. First, he
proposed here a selection of words intended to promote a know-
ledge of orthography and of grammatical rules of the Bengali
language. He also proposed a vocabulary of three or four thousand
words in Bengali which were in general use, and a simple treatise
on arithmetic. For the advanced students, Marshman proposed an
outline of the solar system, a view of geography and a popular
treatise on natural philosophy, a short history and, lastly, a
treatise on ethics and morality.

From Adam's report it appears that the missionaries in
Bengal had under their management a total number of about 134
schools, with nearly 3,000 boys and girls. It is very difficult to give any accurate statistical account of missionary schools because of the frequent fluctuation of both the number of schools and pupils. Most of the Missionary schools taught the students to read and write in their own language.

In 1814, the London Missionary Society had already directed its attention to Vernacular schools and established them in 1820 at Chetia and other places in the neighbourhood of Tollygunge. Another school was set up in a bungalow chapel at Kidderpore in the same year. The Calcutta Church Missionary Association had for many years six hundred children under instruction in their vernacular schools in Calcutta. The Baptist Missionary Society had also several hundreds. About 1822 the Christian Knowledge Society began the system of "school circles", each circle containing five Bengali schools and one Central school. There were in the Kasipore Circle three schools with an average attendance of 220 boys; in the Tollygunge circle seven schools and 550 pupils; and in the Howrah Circle six schools and 652 pupils attending daily on an average. There was a Guru to each school, while the Pundit and Superintending Missionary visited the schools by turns.

Thus, when the missionaries were actively engaged in the spread of vernacular mass education, the Government was doing almost nothing in that direction. Vernacular mass education under the East India Company was, at first, completely ignored.
and then violently and successfully opposed under the spell of the Theory of "Downward filtration." At a time when the Government could not formulate any policy for mass education and when the indigenous system lacked efficiency and organic unity, the missionaries became the pioneers in providing education to the general masses.

The missionaries, in an attempt to expand their schools among the people of Bengal, wanted to improve the indigenous system of education as far as possible. Their course of study included grounding in the basic skills of reading, writing and arithmetic together with an introduction to the modern knowledge of ethical values. The missionaries made a valuable contribution in increasing the effectiveness of the teaching of the three R's, in introducing printed text books and in widening the syllabus. But the most significant service rendered was, of course, their emphasis on the Vernacular medium of instruction. They believed that no sound system of education would be possible except through the mother-tongue.

The Calcutta School Book Society. (1817-54)

The Calcutta School Book Society and the Calcutta School Society played historic roles in promoting the cause of Vernacular education in Bengal (1817-54). The efforts of Missionary pioneers to improve Vernacular education in Bengal were thwarted by the lack of suitable school text-books. The sponsors of the Calcutta School Book Society were inspired by the urge to improve the
intellectual and moral condition of the Indian people and worked on the model of the Cheap Book Society of Dublin (established 1814) and the Society for Promoting Education of the Poor in Ireland (established 1811). The "subscribers" of the Calcutta Book Society met in a preliminary meeting of the College of Fort William on 6 May 1817 with Mr. W.B. Bayley in the Chair and adopted a set of rules laying down the constitution of the proposed society. According to these rules, the association was called Calcutta School Book Society with its objects as "the preparation, publication and cheap or gratuitous supply of works useful in schools and seminaries of learning."

The Calcutta School Book Society in its preliminary meeting, referred to above, appointed a provisional managing committee representing all sections of the educated society of Calcutta with 24 members. Of the European members W.B. Bayley (President, 1817-30), Sir Edward Hyde East, J.H. Harrington, Captain Francis Irvine, Rev. Thomas Thomsen, Rev. William Carey were prominent and among the Indian members Tarinee Charan Mitra, Kritunjoy Vidyalankar, Ramkamal Sen and Radhakanta Deb played a leading part in the educational experiments of the period. Lord Hastings became its first patron and from 1821 it received a monthly grant from Government. Among the later members most illustrious were Sir Edward Ryan (President of the Society, 1830-43), J.E.D. Bethune (President, 1849-51), Sir James Colville (President, 1851-54), Prasanna Kumar Tagore, Ramgopal Ghosh and Russomoy Dutta.
During the early years the School Book Society had succeeded in creating a School book literature of wide variety in the Bengali language. Indeed, the Bengali Department of the School Book Society appeared to have an uncommon vitality and zeal in producing school books in Bengali. This was made possible by the ungrudging support and service of Dr. Yates, Secretary of the Bengali Department of the School Book Society. With the exception of a few books brought out by the Missionaries and the Fort William College, the Bengali Vernacular had been extremely deficient in printed school books. The publications of the School Book Society, covering a variety of subjects like History, Geography, Astronomy, Natural History and Fables etc., had the effect of broadening the narrow curriculum prevalent in the traditional Pathshalis.

In the earlier period (1817-35), the School Book Society had devoted its efforts mainly to the work of providing the major Vernaculars with a suitable series of school-books in the hope of stimulating the desire for English education. In this connection, it is apt to refer to the School Book Society's Report dated 30 April 1836, in which the following significant statement occurs: "So long it was customary to start the Report with Indian Languages and then to proceed to English, but owing to the increased demand for books in the latter, it has now become proper to invert that order." Thus the School Book Society, by yielding the pride of place to English, was merely responding to the growing public demand for English which was
encouraged by Bentinck's Resolution of 7 March 1835.

In the later period (1835-54), the Society had gradually shifted its emphasis from the Vernacular to English and adopted a policy of promoting the harmonious development of both English and the Vernaculars in the realization of its scheme of liberal education for the Indian youth. In the Twelfth Report, dated 13 June 1840, the Committee of the School Book Society further clarified their position. They spoke of the "prospect of English and Vernacular going on harmoniously together, English to impart ideas which elevate the mind and improve the moral condition; it is by the latter alone that those ideas can be communicated through the length and breadth of the land, and by the combination of them both, that all the important ends of education can be attained."15

Table: PUBLICATION OF BOOKS

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<th>Language Group</th>
<th>1817-35 19 yrs.</th>
<th>1835-54 19 yrs.</th>
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<td>Six Vernaculars, including Bengali</td>
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<td>1,56,850</td>
<td>44 p.c.</td>
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<td>28,824</td>
<td>9 p.c.</td>
<td>7,800</td>
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<td>English</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anglo-Asiatic (including Vernacular)</td>
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<tr>
<td>38,950</td>
<td>11 p.c.</td>
<td>23,000</td>
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<td>GRAND TOTAL (for all languages)</td>
<td>3,53,174</td>
<td>7,29,385</td>
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(This table has been prepared from information contained in Annual Reports of the Calcutta School Book Society, (1817-54)
The table of the publications of the Society clearly underlined that there was a vast expansion of the operations in English in the second period (1835-54), which overshadowed the pre-eminent position of the Vernaculars. The Bengali publications of the Society in the second period (1835-54) were mainly reprints and new editions of old works. Though there were some new publications, their number was small. Of these new publications, Sishu Shikya and Sar Sangraho by Dr. Yates and Bhumi Pariman (elements of Land-Surveying) by Prasanna Coomar Tagore proved very popular. Another popular publication of the Society was a Bengali Dictionary called "Obhidham" by Ramchandra Sharma. During these years, the Society's role underwent a significant change. With the growth of Indian Vernacular press, the dearth of suitable Bengali school-books had been largely diminished. So the School Book Society became more important as a distributor of school-books of other publishers than as a publisher. The publications of the independent Vernacular press like Hitopodesh, Prabodh Chandrodaya (Drama in translation), Tales from Shakespeare, Robinson Crusoe etc. seriously challenged the privileged position so long enjoyed by the School Book Society in the matter of publication of Vernacular school-books.

The Calcutta School Society (1818-33):

The Calcutta School Society played a significant role in improving the indigenous elementary schools of Calcutta for
about two decades from 1818. The idea of a school society for supervising elementary schools in Calcutta had been first evolved in the First Report of the Calcutta School Book Society dated 23 December 1818.

The objects of the Calcutta School Society, clearly laid down in the general meeting at the Calcutta Town Hall, were: "to assist and improve the existing schools; and to establish and support any further schools and seminaries which may be requisite with a view to the general diffusion amongst the inhabitants of India within the Provinces subject to the Presidency of Fort William." The operations of the School Society, organized under three Sub-Committees, were as follows: First Sub-Committee: Secretary - E.S. Montague - in-Charge of the Regular Bengali Schools Department; Second Sub-Committee: Secretary - W.H. Pearce - in-Charge of the Indigenous Schools Department; Third Sub-Committee: Secretary - Lt. Francis Irvine - in-Charge of the English Schools Department.

The spectacular success of the Calcutta School Society was due to the sincere efforts of David Hare who became the European Secretary in place of E.S. Montague in 1823, and Radhakanta Deb, the Indian Secretary. It was their honest and unspiring labours that contributed to much of the success of the Society during the later years of its existence. The only other member, who made a permanent mark on the activities of the society, was Dr. Carey. The exertions of the school society
were directed towards the realisation of the following
objects: 21B

1) To help in the improvement of the existing net-work of
indigenous schools in Calcutta;
2) to establish some model English and Bengali Schools,
3) to arrange for higher education of those students who
showed some promise in the schools under the Calcutta School
Society.

The moral and intellectual improvement of the natives
of India by the diffusion of useful knowledge was sought to be
realized by the reform of the native methods of instruction in
the Vernacular pathsalas. William Adam, in his First Report
(1 July 1835), gave a description of the Regular Bengali Schools
of the Calcutta School Society. 22 These schools were set up
by the society to serve as "models" to numerous indigenous
schools and to provide educational facilities to the poor.
From 1820-3 the Society had set up four model schools in four
different parts of Calcutta. But within three years these
schools had to be transferred to the Church Missionary Society
because of financial troubles. 23 In 1832-33, a number of
Agency Houses in Calcutta including the House of Messrs
Mackintosh and Co., the second Treasurers of the Society,
failed and almost all sources of help dried up, so that the
Society was forced to relinquish its patronage of the Indigenous
Schools in February 1833. The only model Bengali School, which
was situated at Arpuly, remained under the direct control of the society till 1833. David Hare, in his Report of the Society between 1829-32, wrote about this Department thus, "The Regular Bengali School at Arpuly still carries on. The number of pupils in this school has been a little augmented. The School at present contains 200 boys who are instructed in every branch which is usually taught in Bengali, viz., writing, reading, spelling, grammar and arithmetic." The example, set by the Arpuly school, exerted great influence on the indigenous schools. Adam spoke highly of its attention to the Vernacular. In his First Report he wrote, "this attention to the cultivation of the language of the country, the chief medium through which instruction can be conveyed to the people, was a highly gratifying feature in the operations of this society; and an additional advantage of the school at Arpuly was the example which it afforded to the whole of the indigenous schools."  

Besides the experiments in connection with the Regular Bengali Schools, the Calcutta School Society did much valuable work in its Indigenous Schools Department. The operations of the Calcutta School Society in the task of reform of Indigenous Schools were specially taken up by Radhakanta Deb, the native Secretary of the Society, who had ultimate responsibility for the same. The superintending Pandit of the Society's Indigenous School Department was instructed to prepare, on the basis of personal visits, a Survey of the Indigenous Pathshala
in Calcutta. According to Adam, the survey conducted by the Calcutta School Society in 1818 and 1819 revealed the existence of 211 Indigenous Schools with 4,908 pupils within the limits of Calcutta.²⁵₈

Improvement of these indigenous schools being very desirable, the Calcutta School Society, under the guidance of Radha Kanta Deb, solicited permission for their officers and pandita to visit and in some measure superintend them. The plan of superintendence was based on three fundamental ideas:

1) To improve the contents of elementary instruction in the Indigenous schools by the introduction of printed class-books of the School Book Society;

2) To improve the quality of teaching of the Goorooos by offering practical instruction as well as theoretical instruction through the visiting pandita; and

3) To provide a system of evaluation through the institution of periodical examinations and rewards. Deb's eminent position in local society and his personal influence with the Goorooos of the Pathsaiaas contributed largely to popularize the school society's plan of superintendence.²⁵₀

The Calcutta School Society's useful career had an abrupt end in early 1833 for various reasons. The reasons for this premature end of the Society were mentioned by David Hare in his letter to the General Committee, dated 10 April 1840.²⁶
One reason for the School Society's decline, as gleaned from this letter, was the withdrawal of subscriptions by most of the European supporters whose financial position was badly affected by the mercantile failures of the big Agency Houses of Calcutta in about 1832-3. Moreover, the Calcutta School Society suffered considerable financial loss on account of the failure of its Treasurers, Messrs Mackintosh and Company. Under the circumstances, the School Society was forced to relinquish its charge of Indigenous schools. Destruction by fire of the building of the Arpuly School dealt a blow to the Bengali Department of the Society.

By rendering significant service to the cause of Vernacular education, the Calcutta School Book Society had left a permanent mark on the Bengali Society. Adam, in his First Report, pointed out the various "improvements" which had been introduced by the Society through its plan of superintendence in Calcutta. "Printed, instead of manuscript, school-books are now in common use. The branches formerly taught are now taught more thoroughly; and instruction is extended to subjects formerly neglected, viz., the orthography of the Bengali language, Geography and moral truths and obligations. The mode of instruction has been improved." 27 Radhakanta Deb, in the School Society's Report on 25 January 1829, paid a glowing tribute to the work of the Society in the following words - "in my humble opinion, the Society has afforded considerable
benefit to the natives of this country, by patronizing the indigenous schools in the metropolis. The children of all respectable natives are taught therein, as the schools are situated either in their own houses, or very near them, and the exertions of the Society have occasioned a great improvement, and their progress increasing daily, for which the continuance of the Society and attention to the indigenous department is very desirable."  


Hodgson, the notable champion of vernacular education, opposed the filtration theory of Macaulay and Bentinck by which they hoped to see education trickle downwards from the higher classes to the lower ones. He vigorously combated the thesis of the Anglicists "that reconstruction and not improvement was the business of state education in Bengal". "You have an indigenous system of vernacular instruction," he urged again and again, "which has slowly and naturally grown out of the wants of the people. Build upon it." The system, which was later on advocated by Adam, was based essentially on the old village organisation. Under the system, each village had not only its head-man and its accountant but its carpenter, potter, barber, smith, and last, though not least, its schoolmaster. "No general effort was, however, made to assist or improve the indigenous schools until 1855."  

Hodgson strongly believed that the knowledge which was
to be the means of intellectual elevation of the people had to be drawn from European and not Indian sources. To put it in his own words, "it may be granted at once, as a general proposition, that sound knowledge, to diffuse which throughout India is our purpose, is to be found in European languages and not in those of the East." He insisted, and not without a vast array of facts and arguments, that if exotic knowledge was to be naturalised and carried to the mass of Indian people, then the Vernaculars must be given supremacy as educational media by the authorities.

The Anglicists considered the plurality and intrinsic poverty of the vernaculars as the main hurdle against adopting them as the medium of instruction. Hodgson tried his best to show that plurality and poverty were as exaggerated in the case of vernaculars as were adequacy and perfection in the case of English as medium of instruction. Hodgson further pointed out that "Bengali, the language of 37 millions, has good dictionaries and grammars as well as words which exhibit a respectable share of precision and compass, whilst its connection with Sanskrit and the peculiar genius of the latter afford extraordinary means of enrichment by new terms competent to express any imaginable modification of thought."

The first cardinal tenet of Hodgson was that educational efforts must be directly addressed to the enlightenment and uplift of the mass of the people and not to those of certain
classes who chose to avail themselves of the means of education. He went a step further and declared that partial diffusion of knowledge, which was only to be expected from the adoption of a foreign medium, was worse than valueless so far as the good of the country as a whole was concerned. He was opposed to the adoption of English as the medium of instruction and official language, because it might create a monopoly of knowledge liable to be used as weapon of oppression of many by the few. On the other hand, he regarded the Vernacular medium as a more suitable instrument capable of bringing knowledge within the reach of many.

Hodgson was equally against the adoption of Sanskrit and Arabic languages and learning as the media and content of general education. The method which he considered specially appropriate for making use of the Oriental languages and literatures was that which Mr. Wilkinson had tried with success. In fact, the influence of Wilkinson's ideas and experiments is visible throughout Hodgson's disquisition on this subject. He regarded the Oriental languages worthy of encouragement for the enrichment of Vernaculars and Oriental literature rendering European knowledge attractive and acceptable to the people.

Hodgson and others of his way of thinking believed that the truth of European Science and knowledge could be rendered accessible to the learned as well as the unlettered
classes by conveying them in their own Vernacular. "To seek to spread our knowledge", he said, "directly through an English organ is to fling away every species of facilitation, conciliation and compromise". On the other hand, his counsel to his countrymen was... "let us give to our eminently generous and useful truths the facility and homely aptitude for Vernacular media. So and so only, may we hope gradually to draw over the multitude to our side."36

Hodgson had a definite scheme of education for raising select instruments intended to furnish the substratum of a broad education system. These instruments were the pioneers of Vernacular literature whose mission was to be to adapt and transfuse European Knowledge in Vernaculars. And this project of producing a body of pioneers was to be executed through a Normal college dedicated to the purpose of creating well-trained groups of translators and teachers. It may be remarked, however, that the loftily conceived project of a Normal college by Hodgson was criticised by others. F. Boutros, Principal of Delhi College, said, "it was apparently too much in advance of the state of the country...." He further pointed out the expensive character of the experiment "which unnecessarily delayed and rendered unduly expensive a general system of Vernacular translation."37 However, this plan of Normal College as the creative nursery of competent teachers and good text-book writers was not approved by the Government
when it was put forward in 1843.

The Anglo-Indian press, which had for sometime hesitated, took up the case vigorously on his side. "It is a plan", wrote a leading Calcutta journal of October 30, 1841, "which calls for the support of the Government, and we cannot doubt that it will meet with the hearty concurrence of the Home authorities and the Home public." The Friend of India wrote: "without an English Education for those who are in a sphere of life to benefit from it, the edifice of national education would want its rich and noble entablature; without a Vernacular Education, the edifice would want the elements of solidity and permanence. Our highest wish will be gratified when there is an English Seminary in every district, a Vernacular School in every village."38

"All I say of instruction in English is," Hodgson summed up his position, "that its extreme costliness and no less extreme inappropriateness to ordinary uses, prescribed its employment at the public cost in a special, instead of a general promiscuous manner, as at present; and this, as well to ensure efficient or profitable study as to prevent such excessive waste of funds as has heretofore totally crippled, and must still do so, that sort of education which alone is suitable to ordinary wants and therefore primarily entitled to public support."39
iii. The Official experiments in Vernacular education (1835-44):

The question of the position of Vernacular in the educational system of Bengal had been long debated by early pioneers like Dr. Marshman and Dr. W. Carey as well as notable publicists like B. Hodgson and W. Adam, who brought to the attention of the Government the necessity of adopting Vernacular medium for promotion of mass education in Bengal. The early advocates of the cause of Vernacular education considered it the most effective instrument for instruction of the mass of the people. The pith of their arguments for Vernacular medium of instruction was directed in favour of popular education that was ignored by the wider prevalence of 'downward filtration' theory which governed the educational thinking of the Government.40

The General Committee of Public Instruction, in its Annual Report of 1835, indirectly admitted for the first time in an official document that "the instruction of mass of the people through the medium of their own language was the ultimate object to be kept in view", yet meanwhile teachers had to be trained, a literature had to be created, and the cooperation of upper and middle classes of society had to be secured. The following extract from the Annual Report of the General Commit of P.I., 1835, clearly emphasised the importance of the Vernacular medium of instruction as the best instrument of mass education:

"We are deeply sensible of the importance of encouraging the
cultivation of the Vernacular languages. We do not conceive that the order of the 7 March precludes us from doing this, and we have constantly acted on this construction. In the discussion which preceded that order, the claims of the Vernacular languages were broadly and prominently admitted by all parties and the question submitted for the decision of Government only concerned the relative advantage of teaching English on the one side and the learned Eastern languages on the other. It was, therefore, unnecessary for the Government, in deciding the question between the rival languages, to take any notice of the Vernacular tongues, and consequently we have thought nothing could reasonably be inferred from its omission to take such notice. "We conceive the formation of a Vernacular Literature to be the ultimate object to which all our efforts must be directed." 

A further illustration of the attitude of the General Committee itself may be given from their report dated 24 February 1835, which just preceded the issue of Bentinck's Resolution. In dealing with their Secretary's report on the Hindu College, they say: "His report, on the whole, excites a favourable impression of the general literary attainments of the youths. He has pointed out some defects which, we trust, will be remedied:—the most prominent is the neglect of the Bengalee language. We concur in the importance of directing more attention of the youths to the attainment of a critical
knowledge of their mother tongue, and approve of the measures adopted to ensure that object. It was the aim of the General Committee not to substitute English for the Vernacular in the Institute of higher learning, but, first, to cultivate a bilingual system for those pupils for whom English was regarded as essential, and secondly, if possible, to develop in time the Vernacular schools up to the level of those in which the medium was English. As this process took a long time to build up, some additional measure was also taken into account.

Macaulay, the President of the General Committee, urged the slow but sure course on which alone could Vernacular education be developed by raising up a large class of enlightened natives who would be familiar with the best modes of Vernacular composition and acquainted with the European knowledge.\footnote{43}

Two years passed, but the intentions of the General Committee could not be carried into effect. There was only a piece-meal attempt to honour the recommendation of the General Committee by providing one or more teachers of the Vernacular language as a regular part of the establishment of each English School. The idea behind this measure was that "the pupils should be constantly exercised in translating into their own language, as well as into English, from the time they enter the Seminaries till their departure; and that they should also practise original composition in both languages as soon as their minds have been sufficiently open to attempt it with advantage."\footnote{44}
official language in the Courts and Revenue department gave great impulse to Vernacular education. The following is the Resolution of the Governor General of India in Council:—

"The attention of his Lordship in Council has lately been called to the Regulations of the Bengal Code, which positively enjoin the use of the Persian language in Judicial and Fiscal proceedings... His Lordship in Council strongly feels it to be just and reasonable that those judicial and fiscal proceedings on which the dearest interests of the Indian people depend should be conducted in a language which they understand."45

In conformity with this resolution of the Governor-General of India, Act XXIX of 1837 was passed in order to dispense with the use of the Persian language in official transaction. It is very difficult to over-emphasise the importance of this measure to the growth of Vernacular education. This salutary reform would bring within the reach of persons educated in the Vernacular medium various subordinate posts in the Revenue and Judicial departments. In other words, persons with some knowledge of judicial and Fiscal proceedings would be available for Government recruitment.46

In 1838-39, Adam submitted his three-volume Report on Indigenous education to the Government. He had collected an enormous mass of facts regarding the traditional system of education on the basis of four years' hard labour and specially
emphasized the regeneration of the old system by adopting the Vernacular medium and traditional structure of indigenous Pathashalas as the most effective means of doing it. Adam, in his Reports, concluded thus: "The actual position and prevailing policy of the Government demand the adoption of comprehensive measures for the promotion and right direction of national education. We are among the people, but not of them. We rule over them and traffic with them, but they do not understand our character and we do not penetrate theirs. Adam mainly urged the Government to promote mass education through Vernacular. This vital recommendation of Adam was carefully examined by the Committee of Public Instruction in the following words: "Although dissenting from the principles laid down by Mr. Adam and certainly not entertaining any very sanguine expectation of ultimate benefit from their adoption, it was considered by a majority of the Committee that it might be satisfactory to Government if some proposal for an experimental trial on these principles on a small scale were submitted for its consideration and orders."

Lord Auckland, in his Minute of 24 November 1839, made a definite pronouncement about the issue of medium of instruction as urged by Bentinck's Resolution, and firmly opposed any reopening of the issue. His views on this matter were clearly expressed thus: "I have thus stated what has seemed most important on the subject of introducing the Vernacular medium"
in our common District Schools; I mean, as to the general principle of such a change, for the measure could not be named as one for early adoption, with no class books prepared or teachers versed in these books yet trained for their duties. And as the contrary system has been actually established, it is right that, unless urgent reasons for abandoning that system demanded attention, it should be fully tried, with the improvement of which it may fairly be susceptible". Thus Auckland made no serious attempt to introduce the Vernacular as medium of instruction but referred to the urgent need of preparing suitable Vernacular class-books in his Minute (paragraphs 26-29) which was accepted by the General Committee in its Report of 1840. The Reports for 1840-41 and 1841-42 minutely examined the ways and means of preparing a series of Vernacular class-books, and recommended: Firstly - "that the works to be rendered into the Vernacular languages should be first prepared in English suited to the circumstances of this Country"; Secondly - "that these works should be collected from the existing treatises with the exception of the spelling book, grammar and dictionary and Vocabulary. These last are not to be prepared first in English;" thirdly - "that the local arithmetic and Accounts of the Province should form one of the first subjects of the study, and that this treatise should be at once prepared without being previously written in English;" fourthly, - that the first work to be prepared in English, and rendered into the Vernacular, should be under
100 pages, conveying valuable instruction in the simplest language; fifthly - that these should be followed by - The history of the Province in which the Seminary is located, an Ethnological view of the Rise, Progress, and fall of Kingdoms and Empires, A compendium of General Geography with a few leading statistical facts, A History of India, History of England, A description of the Wonders of Nature and Art in India; Sixthly - that the aggregate of all the works should not exceed fifty pages except General History and the History of India; Seventhly - that during the preparation of this series, the approved existing works should be brought into use; eighthly - that all the above works should be taught only in the Vernacular Institutions.50 "We have subsequently taken further measures to bring the fuller plan approved to maturity, by the selection of qualified indivi- duals for the preparation of some works, and by general invitation in those directions where we had prospects of success, for the preparation of others." These instructions were acted upon but the results were not conducive to the improvement of Vernacular education. The primary cause of this defect was partly the excessive bias for English educa- tion and partly the absence of effective organisation and planning.51

Hardinge, who succeeded Lord Auckland in 1844, effected a significant innovation in fostering Vernacular mass education in Bengal against the rising tide of English education. But
the momentum of English education had reached such a pitch that it was very difficult to improve Vernacular education in spite of the initiative and enthusiasm of missionary pioneers and devoted individuals like Hodgson and Wilkinson. Government policy in regard to Vernacular education had so far been prejudiced by the excessive zeal for English education shown by the Committee. The Government did introduce occasional experiments to patronise Village Schools. But these isolated attempts to improve Vernacular education proved unsatisfactory. Even the recommendation of Adam did not meet with much encouragement in Bengal. Hardinge now made a bold decision to establish 101 Vernacular Schools in the Lower Province of Bengal. These new schools were designed for the instruction of lower classes of the Community whom the Anglo-Vernacular system of education did not reach. The Government's views were explained in a letter dated 18 December 1844 to the Board of Revenue, under whose superintendence the schools were placed. "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.

"The number of schools which the funds at the disposal of the Government will admit of being formed, is one hundred and one, to each of which a master will be appointed capable of giving instruction in Vernacular Reading and Writing,
Arithmetic, Geography and the Histories of India and Bengal.

The salaries of the Masters would be as follows:

- 20 Masters at 25 rupees a month.
- 30 " at 20 " 
- 51 " at 15 " 

The distribution of the schools would be in accordance with the following scheme:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schools</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Patna Division</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhagaiapore Division</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moorshedabad Division</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dacca Division</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jessore Division</td>
<td>19</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cuttack Division</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chittagong Division</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>101</td>
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</table>

The Schools would be established in any two or three of the principal towns of each district. It was the desire of the Governor Lord Hardinge that all boys should be charged a small fee for their tuition. A token amount of tuition stimulated a sense of appreciation by the more respectable classes to send their children which would otherwise be attended by those of the lowest orders. This was undertaken as a safeguard so that like the Missionary Girls' Schools it did not become the haven of the destitute and outcastes of
the Society. 53

The following Table shows the number of schools originally allotted to each district, together with the number of schools established, the number of scholars and the amount realised from schooling fees during the years 1945-49. 54

REMKALLINGX Regarding the working of Hardinge's Scheme of Vernacular schools, the Report of the Sudder Board of Revenue for the year 1845 stated: "There can be no doubt, the Board think, that the measure so far has been less successful than might have been anticipated - and this, notwithstanding the officers of the Government have every where evinced great interest in the scheme, and made great efforts to further it; and they are of the opinion that the results sufficiently indicate that the measure is not likely to succeed on its present footing" - Report for 1845. 55

"The success of the operations of the next year (1847) has been of a very mixed character, and, upon the whole, not encouraging, but the Board are by no means prepared to agree with those who advise that the Government scheme should be at once abandoned. On the contrary, we conceive that good must result from their directing local attention and enquiry to this most important subject, and as attention is apt to flag and enquiry to become vague and desultory when employed upon matters purely speculative, it is very essential, in their opinion, to maintain for the present some, at any rate, of
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DIVISION</th>
<th>1845</th>
<th>1846</th>
<th>1847</th>
<th>1848</th>
<th>1849</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No. of schools allotted</td>
<td>No. of schools established</td>
<td>No. of scholars fees realised during the year</td>
<td>No. of schools established</td>
<td>No. of scholars fees realised during the year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jessore</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>339</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dacca</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>109</td>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moorshedabad</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>59</td>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhagailpore</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>192</td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patna</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuttack</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chittagong</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TOTAL: 101 30 999 36 72 1730 911 69 1983 1534 73 2095 1723 58 1733 1208
these substantive establishments. The Government scheme, the Board of Revenue observed, has been condemned as premature, because the schools have been set up without a due provision of properly qualified teachers, and a regular series of elementary books; perhaps better grounds for such criticism would have been afforded, had masters been trained and books printed before there were either schools or scholars" - Report for 1847. 56

From the observations of local officers, and the results of the experiments hitherto, the fate of the Vernacular schools appeared quite gloomy. The Report of 1846 stated: "Success is quite hopeless, in their opinion, when all those entrusted with the extension of schemes of this nature entertain such opinions as they have expressed, not only respecting its success, but its claims to success. Nevertheless, the Board are not disposed to abandon the plan so long as any vitality remains." 57

In reviewing the working of Vernacular schools for 1849, the Revenue Board pronounced no clear-cut opinion as regards the measure of their success. A perusal of the Report of the Vernacular schools showed that in the native mind no deep interest had been awakened. The people were indifferent. In some districts the indifference passed into distrust and opposition." 58 This verdict about the experiment of Vernacular schools in Bengal was confirmed by the Report of the
Council of Education, dated 3 October 1853, which thus concluded, "after careful study of the periodical Reports furnished by the Board of Revenue........... having shown that, the Vernacular schools instituted in 1844, had failed to produce the effects anticipated". The real cause of failure of the experiment of Vernacular schools was the reluctance of those parents who hesitated to send their children to school for a purely Vernacular education. This view was clearly hinted respectively in the reports of the Collector of Natore and of the Commissioner of Dacca in 1846. "The native gentlemen, who constructed the school house, informed me that the institution was useless. They expressed deep regret that Government should support Vernacular schools which they do not want, and withhold English Schools of which they stand so much in need. They said they did not want Government to teach them in their own language, and they called upon me to substitute an English school in its stead, as without the assistance of Government instruction in English was unattainable." The Commissioner of Dacca also remarked about Vernacular schools in the same strain. "I am confident that, except in rare instances, the schools, as at present constituted, will not succeed. They have not the feelings and wishes of the body of the people in their favour, and this is quite enough in itself to account for their failure. In a case like this, the good will and favourable disposition of the people are the only
foundations upon which we can build with any hope of success." 61
In spite of discouraging reports, the Council of Education
adhered to its policy of supporting Vernacular education in
the rural area; but Government's support to the indigenous
vernacular system/confined to the model vernacular schools and
circle-Pundits. 62

iv. The Non-official ideas and experiments in Vernacular
education:

The official attitude towards vernacular education
was somewhat unsympathetic, as the General Committee of Public
Instruction was wedded to the "theory of Downward Filtration"
which made them confine education to the upper and middle
classes of society. This attitude resulted in the unceremoni-
ous rejection of the elaborate recommendations of Adam to
improve the indigenous vernacular schools. They characterised
Adam's educational plan as "almost impracticable" and involving
"much more expense and difficulty than Mr. Adam has supposed." 63
All these evidences of official hostility to vernacular edu-
tion impelled the leaders of the educated community of Bengal
in the second and third decades of the 19th century to try
their best to remove doubts in the minds of the people about
the utility of vernacular education. 64 The impetus appears
to have come from the urgency to check the excessive lure of
English on the part of the rising generation. The contemporary
Reports of the Calcutta School Book Society bear ample testmony
to this. We learn from these Reports that many young men, educated in English schools and colleges, could not write correctly in their mother-tongue. Some of them "deemed Bengalee and Hindustanee contemptible and unworthy of their notice." 65

Among other factors which had helped to create a favourable climate of vernacular education and which gave an impetus to the establishment of a new class of vernacular schools by the educated intelligentsia of Bengal, mention should be made of the liberal Press Act passed by Sir Charles Metcalfe in 1836, which helped the rise of the vernacular Press 66 and the Act XXIX passed by Lord Auckland in 1837 which abolished Persian as the language of the Courts and replaced it by vernaculars. A third factor which had helped to focus public attention on the importance of Vernacular education was the vigorous advocacy of its cause by William Adam in his Reports dated 1835-1833. The measures taken by Metcalfe and Auckland and the masterly Reports of Adam had combined to bring about a new awareness of the urgency of improving the facilities of vernacular education for the rising generation. We will first of all give an account of the Hindoo College "Paut Shallah" 67 (Patehaia) which was the most important of these new-model schools and exercised considerable influence similar experiments organised afterwards.

The Hindoo College "Pautshallah", was established by the Managers of the Hindoo College on 13 January 1840 to educate
the young men to teach their countrymen the learning of Europe in their own tongue." The Managing Committee of the Hindoo College, which was composed of some outstanding figures of the time such as Radhakanta Deb, Ramkamat Sen, Dwarkanath Tagore and Prasanna Coomer Tagore, wanted to arrest the headlong rush for English education by setting up an ideal Bengali Pathshala under the management of the Hindoo College. On the occasion of the opening of the "Pathshahahl Sir Edward Ryan, the then President of the General Committee of Public Instruction, emphasized the importance of cultivating the "vernacular as the means of improvement of the great mass of the Natives of India."  

The Friend of India, in its report dated 23 January, 1840, gave a vivid description of the Pathshahahl five days after it was started: "A noble edifice constructed by native generosity... for purpose of diffusing the science and knowledge of the West among the youth of the country, through the medium of their own language..." "Concluding, the Friend of India hailed the establishment of the 'Pathshahahl' as "one of the most gigantic strides in national improvement which Bengal has yet taken." Immediate response to the Pathshahahl was encouraging, within five days of its start no fewer than 453 pupils presented themselves "not gratuitously, but upon payment of an annual fee." The General Report on Public Instruction for the
Lower Provinces for the year 1842-43, shows that on 30 April 1842 the roll-strength was 474, but thereafter the numbers fell sharply and on 20 April 1843 there were "252 boys paying at the rate of 8 As. per month, divided into 12 classes." The number of pupils in the Pautshallah was 170 in 1844-45. The General Report on Public Instruction for the year 1846-47 showed an improvement in the roll-strength of the Pautshallah which stood at 200.70

A report of a contemporary Bengali Journal shows that the Pautshallah had deteriorated in later years and this was due to the lack of interest and apathy on the part of the Hindoo College authorities whose initial enthusiasm appears to have flagged with the passage of time.70C Another reason was the unsympathetic attitude of the Council of Education which, being inspired by "Anglicist" zeal, had little love for a vernacular school like the "Pautshallah". This was revealed by the Council's proposal to abolish it altogether when the charge of the school had devolved on them in 1852. Stoutly opposing this move, the Sambad Prabhakar, in its issue dated 19 December 1853, observed that the Pautshallah was discharging a useful role by strengthening the foundations of the vernacular in the rising generation of the country, and this it did at a time when the dominance of English was at its peak.70D

Another new-type Bengali school, that was established
after the model of the Hindoo College "Pautshahilah", was the Tattvabodhini Pathshala on 13 June 1840 in the out-house of Babu Dakshinaranjan Mookerjee at Simla, Calcutta. A contemporary English Journal reported the establishment of the Tattvabodhini Pathshala thus: "A new school having for its object the education of the rising youths in the vernacular languages of the country is about to be established in Calcutta under the auspices of some enlightened native Baboos." It was placed under the care of Akshay Kumar Datta, the most trusted follower of Debendranath Tagore, who felt that this was the only means to instil in the rising youths love for their culture and language, which had been neglected in English schools.

From a reference in the Tattvabodhini Patrika, dated August 1843, we learn that Debendranath's object in starting this Pathshala was "to check the excessive influence of the Christian Missionaries which threatened to submerge the language and culture of Bengal by spreading European arts and sciences through English." Both its founder Debendranath and headmaster Akshoy Kumar Datta devoted themselves to writing new school text books in Bengali. Akshoy Kumar was a gifted author of school text-books on Geography, Mathematics and other scientific subjects. Both in matter and style, these works were superior to the Missionary treatises which had so
long held the field in elementary education in Bengal. 

The popularity of the Pathshala sharply dwindled in the course of a few years. The roll-strength of the Pathshala diminished as the craze for English education increased. As there was a number of Anglo-vernacular schools in Calcutta, the object of the institution had very remote chance of realisation in the City. So Debendranath transferred the Tattvabodhini Pathshala from Calcutta to Bansberia in Hooghly on 30 April 1843. It was felt, as expressed by Akhoy Kumar in his inaugural speech on the occasion of re-opening of the Pathshala at Bansberia, that "we are subject to foreign rule, we are being educated in a foreign tongue. ... So, at this moment, it has become imperative for us to provide education and also true religious instruction in our own languages, otherwise within a short time there will be no national difference between our countrymen and the British." 

The success of the experiment of education through vernacular, as sponsored by the Tattvabodhini pathshala, elicited unqualified praise in the Report of the Council of Education in 1845-46. The success of the Pathshala was, however, short-lived. It faced ruin with the withdrawal of financial support by Debendranath in 1848 following the insolvency of the Union Bank and Carr-Tagore Company. The Pathshala was soon replaced by a missionary school under Alexander Duff. The full impact of the Tattvabodhini
Patshala is yet to be assessed. Even then, it may be observed that at a critical hour in the cultural history of Bengal, the Tattavabodhini Patshala "dealt a rude blow to his (Duff's) dream of shattering the citadel of Hinduism and deluging the land with the surging tides of Christianity." 77

A few other new-model vernacular schools of Calcutta and mofussil of this period may be mentioned. Among these, the Jnanpradayini Patshala was established on December 31, 1849 at Nebutola, Burrabazar, Calcutta, in the house of Jyoti Gopal Basak, under the initiative of educated youths belonging to the "Perseverance Society." It was established on the model of the Hindoo College Patshahal "in order to provide vernacular education of a better quality than was available in the existing Patshalas." 78 Purnachandrodaya lamented saying that "there are many boys living in this ward who still frequent the defective indigenous patshalas of the Gooromahashoys", because the people still felt strongly attached to the time-honoured Gooromahashoy and his traditional system of instruction. There were a large member of new-model vernacular schools, which were carried on in the different parts of Calcutta on the lines of the Hindoo College Patshahal. Among these, mention may be made of the Oriental Seminary Patshala, the Banga Vidya Prakashika Patshala of Malanga Lane, and the free Bengalee Schools of Garanhatta, Colootola, Baghbazar, Sukia Street and other places. 79 The Oriental Seminary
Pathshala was set up by Hare Krishna Addy in connection with the Oriental Seminary which was a flourishing English school of those days. The Oriental Seminary had a branch at Bhowanipore where ancient history, literature and science were taught through the Bengali medium. The Banga Vidya Prakashika Pathshala of Malanga Lane, which was established under the auspices of Babu Beni Madhab Mullick, a public-spirited gentleman of the locality, was another interesting experiment of this period which was organized after the pattern of the Hindo College Pustahallah. The Purnachandrodaya observed that these new-model Vernacular schools, which were started by the intelligentsia about this time, are to be viewed as an attempt to bring about a "revival of our tradition and culture" which were about to be submerged under the deluge of the new culture of English.

The initiative of the educated community in bringing into existence new-model vernacular schools was not confined to the city of Calcutta; a number of experiments were carried out in the mofussil also. The Lahisadal Jnandatree Pathshala was established in the Midnapur district under the patronage of Dewan Ram Narain Giri of Mahisadal Raj. Another new-model vernacular school was established in 1847 on the charity of the public and the personal donation of Bhagabati Ganguly of Baghbazar. Mention should be made also of an experiment at
Janai, Hooghly, in February 1850 under the name of Janai Training School, which enjoyed the support of the Mookherjee Brothers of Uttarpara. A free Bengalee school was opened at a village named Raut in Naibati, about 24 miles north of Calcutta. The contemporary vernacular Press contained reports of many other experiments in new-type vernacular education in the different parts of Bengal such as Midnapur, Nadia, 24-Parganas, Barrackpore, Chandernagore and Krishnagar.

Among these we may mention Motilal Seal's Free Primary School at Ariadaha and the Patshala at Nibadhai. Another new-model vernacular Patshala was set up at Barrackpore in 1846 with the support of Debendranath. This was modelled on the pattern of instruction as practised in the Tattvabodhini Patshala. A similar type of institution was established at Sukhsagar in Nadia by Kasiswar Mittra, a devoted follower of Debendranath. They played an important part in the extension of popular education through vernacular by unofficial efforts.

The Vernacular Literature Society was contemplated by Jaykrishna Mukherjee of Uttarpara on the lines of the School Book Society for the purpose of promoting the cause of Vernacular (Bengali) Literature. Rev. J. Long, in his report on the state of the Native Press (1859), specially mentioned the names of Babu Joy Krishna Mukherjee and J.E.D. Bethune as the Chief patrons of the above Society. Among its founders were J.E.D. Bethune, Jaykrishna, Rev. W. Kay, Principal of Bishop's
College, Dr. Lamb, John C. Marshman of Serampore, W. Seton-Kerr and A. Grote of Civil Service, H. Pratt, the Arch-deacon of Calcutta, Rasamay Datta, Meredith Townsend, a journalist and H. Woodrow. Pratt and Townsend had agreed to act as Secretaries.92

We learn from Rev. J. Long that the objects of the Vernacular Literature Society were "to publish translations of such works as are not included in the design of the Tract or Christian Knowledge Societies on the one hand, or of the School Book and Asiatic Societies on the other, and likewise to provide a small and useful domestic Vernacular Literature in Bengal."93A In a letter to the Education Department, dated 2 August 1856, R. B. Chapman, Secretary of the Vernacular Literature Society said: "The Vernacular Literature Society takes for its field the provision of a healthy domestic literature, at once attractive in its character and moral and civilizing in its effect." From contemporary vernacular journals, we come to know that the Society, during the first eight years (1851-58), published 22 different treatises, 17 of which were translations from English, mostly biographical narratives and popular tales. The publications, which had a comparatively respectable sale, were 'Protapaditya Charita' by Harish Chandra Vidyalankar, 'Sushilopakhyan' by Madhu Sudan Mookherjee, 'Robinson Crusoe' by Robinson, 'Paul and Virginia' by Ram Narayan Vidyaratna, 'Percy Anecdotes' by Ram Chandra Mitra and
The outstanding achievement of the Vernacular Literature Society was the publication of the 'Vividhartha Samgraha', a Bengali monthly, illustrated as its prototype, the English Penny Magazine. The object of producing this cheap illustrated monthly was to propagate honest and delightful propositions among the people and thus to help them to gain in knowledge. The first six series of the journal were printed under the editorship of Rajendra Lal Mitra. A feature of the popular journal, which deserves special mention, was the publication of articles on Zoology, Botany, Physics and Geography with illustrations and written in an attractive style. The appeal of 'Vividhartha Samgraha' was irresistible to children and womenfolk who were avid readers of it. Some of the V.L. Society's publications, like 'Paul and Virginia' and 'Susila Upakhyana', proved to be extremely popular among them and did a lot to wean them away from the traditional fare like Vidyansundar. Even young Rabindranath received great delight from "this journal of pictures", but he regretted in his autobiography (Jiban-Smriti) that he did not find "another such periodical of same standard, fit to be used by the public at large in their leisure hours."

In the context of official neglect, the role of some Bengali thinkers and educationists deserve special mention. Of these, Prasanna Commar made a great contribution in
stimulating public awareness about the value of vernacular mass education. A staunch follower of Rammohan, he rightly held that the liberation of his countrymen from the fetters of superstition lay in the spread of education. He generously supported Benevolent Institution, Hindu Free School, Calcutta School Society, and took the initiative in founding the Hindu College Pathshala on 18 January 1840 as Director of the Hindu College Managing Committee (1832-54).98 His keen interest in educational matters led to his appointment as a member of the General Committee of Public Instruction for 1837, 1840 and 1844-50. Despite his English education, Presanna Coomar never under-rated the importance of Vernacular education. His interest in vernacular mass education began with his association with the Gaudiya Samaj.99 In 1831 he convincingly argued that Bengali should replace Persian as the court language, as it was far easier for a few English Civilians to learn the Vernacular language than for all Indians to learn English. His advocacy did not go in vain, for by act XXIX of 1837 and Act XII of 1843 Bengali gradually replaced Persian in all court proceedings.100

Iswar Chandra Gupta (1812-1859), a poet and satirist, was a vigorous champion of Bengali language as the medium of popular education. His deep love of Bengali culture found fruitful expression in the establishment of the well-known journal, Sambad Prabhakar,101A in 1831. His journalistic career was also associated with the short-lived 'Sambad-Ratnabali', 'Pashanda-Peeran' and 'Sambad Sudha-ranjan'. His
satires, in which he excelled, spared none, not even the Governor-General or Members of the Council. But his greatest pleasure lay in wringing the ears of the Anglicized Babus, who dreamt of going to heaven with boots on and smoking cheroots. He was an active member of the 'Banga-Ranjinee Sabha' (1838), which encouraged people to write and speak Bengali correctly. His zeal for promoting the vernacular language is clearly reflected in his poem "Matribhasa", in which he exhorted his countrymen to dedicate themselves to the task of improving the Bengali language and of spreading education. Rev. Krishna Mohan Banerjee (1813-1885) another protagonist of vernacular medium - was born in 1813 of a poor orthodox Brahmin family. His brilliant academic career in the Hindu College was influenced by Derozio. An erudite Sanskrit scholar, he knew that the cultivation of Sanskrit alone would not in anyway meet the new needs of Bengal. He believed that Bengali could be the medium of expression for literary and scientific volumes of "Encyclopaedia Bengelinsia".

The Bengali version of this monumental work is known as "Vidyakalpadrum". In this work, he gave for the first time a faithful translation of Euclid in Bengali, which facilitated the study of geometry in Bengali. His "Sarbadarsan-Sangraha", a Bengali translation of his famous dialogues on Hindu philosophy published in 1861, showed how effectively the Bengali language could be used to express the most abstruse philosophical thought.
Akshay Kumar Dutta (1820-1886) was another champion of vernacular medium. His breadth of vision as an educationist was rather surprising in view of the fact that even in England the system of free public education for the masses did not obtain recognition, when he published his work "Dharmaniti" in 1855.102 Akshay Kumar started his career as a teacher of the Tattvabodhini Pathala at Calcutta in 1840. He came into the limelight as editor of the Tattvabodhini Patrika (1843-55). In the words of Ramesh Chender Dutt, "all that could enlighten the expanding intellect of Bengal and dispel darkness and ignorance found a convenient vehicle in the Tattvabodhini Patrika" under the editorship of Akshay Kumar. He sincerely believed that true education alone was the panacea of all social, political and economic evils. He was a staunch advocate of compulsory free education.103

In "Dharmaniti" Akshay Kumar tried to focus on a rationalized educational system. His cast of mind was positive, practical and he prepared a detailed scheme for the different stages of education. In many illuminating articles in the Tattvabodhini Patrika, Akshay Kumar built up a remarkable symphony of arguments in favour of vernacular languages as the media of mass-education. To try to make the masses English speaking would be waste of time, energy and money. Education through the medium of English would confine it to the elite groups of the higher classes. He firmly held the view that the Government alone would be able to spread knowledge among the masses. In his ideas of mass-education, the concept of
free primary education reached its full flowering. 104

Rajnarayan Baùu 105 (1826-1899) was an outspoken critic of his educated community's blind imitation of western culture and values. Nothing was more painful to him than to see an educated Bengalee treating with contempt the cultural heritage of his motherland. He emphasized that Bengali language had to be developed, for it was only in Bengali that the people of Bengal could best express their thoughts, feelings and emotions. The Government, however, spent more money on English schools than on Vernacular schools. Neither was any serious attempt made to enforce the use of Bengali in courts of law despite of the provision made for this under Act XXIX of 1837. 106 Another votary of vernacular mass-education was Lal Behari Dey 107 (1824-1894), whose ideas proved far ahead of his time. He was an enthusiastic member of the Bethune Society and the Bengal Social Science Association. He read before the Bethune Society two important 108 papers entitled "Primary Education in Bengal" (1858) and 'Vernacular Education in Bengal' (1859) and before the Bengal Social Science Association (1864) a noteworthy paper on "Compulsory Education in Bengal". 109 He condemned the Downward Filtration theory, and observed that a similar view had been propounded thirty years ago by the Council of Education. He argued that if every child was educated, he was bound to grow into a man exercising a salutary influence over all. An uneducated man, unaware of his rights and duties, could not but be
drag on society. Thus the guardians of society and of the state as well stood to gain, if they insisted upon every parent educating his children. Lalbehari's main purpose was to combat the aristocratic view of filtration of education which was affecting the current educational thinking: "The lower strata of the social fabric must be permeated through the higher strata. Educate the upper and middle classes, and the lower classes will be instructed and elevated."110 Lal Behari replied to this by pointing out that the education of the masses had not been advanced by the education of the higher classes for the last two thousand years.

Bhudev Mukhopadhyaya (1827-98) entered Government Education Service in 1848 after completing his education in the Hindu College from 1839 to 1845. It was with the zeal of a missionary that he addressed himself to the task of spreading education among his countrymen. But his greatest service as an educationist lay in his vigorous advocacy of vernacular education. Though aware of the advantage of learning English, Bhudev always exhorted Bengalee youths to learn Sanskrit and Bengali. He made it clear in his writings in 'Siksha Darpan' a Bengali monthly and his works in connection with the Tattvabodhini Sabha, that it was only through the vernacular that national unity could be attained and patriotism promoted. The knowledge of English, though useful, should not de-nationalise us.111

The views of these Bengali educationists and thinkers
on the urgency of cultivating Vernacular as the medium of instruction gradually prepared the way for the recognition of the Vernacular as the medium of mass education in the Despatch of 1854. The Despatch declared that "it is neither our aim nor desire to substitute the English language for the Vernacular dialects of the country. We have always been most sensible of the importance of the use of the languages which alone are understood by the great mass of the population."

"In any general system of education, the English language should be taught where there is a demand for it; but such instruction should always be combined with a careful attention to the study of the Vernacular language.... We look therefore, to the English language and to the Vernacular languages of India together as the media for the diffusion of European knowledge, and it is our desire to see them cultivated together in all schools in India."

The new tone of the official attitude to the Vernaculars as the medium of instruction, was highly appreciated by an unknown correspondent in the Friend of India: "While English education is offered to all who have time and opportunity, the claims of the masses to education through their own language are recognised and the Calcutta Council of Education will not be entrusted any longer with the power of throwing obstacles in the way of popular enlightenment. During its twenty years of action it has had money for every sort of school connected..."
with the education of a few Baboos, but it refused to carry out the magnificent plans of Mr. Adam, it mis-represented past experiments in Vernacular education... "I need not refer to the Council's appointing a gentleman to draw up a list of Vernacular school books who did not know one word of the language. I am happy to say, however, that the Council has of late attended more to the Vernacular in their English Schools, but it is to be said more in sorrow than in anger that what obstructions the defunct Military Board threw to roads and bridges of the country, similar obstructions have been thrown on popular education by the Council of Education which will soon be a thing of the past, and I am sure the present members will be glad to be received for attending to questions on Vernacular education to decide on which they possess neither leisure nor precious qualifications."


3A. Calcutta Review, June 1854, Vernacular Education For Bengal, P. 297.


7A. J.C. Marshman, op.cit, Vol.II, P.82-833

7B. Josuah Marshman, Hints Relative to Native Schools together with their outline of an Institution for their Extension and Management, Serampore, 1816, P.10-17.


8B. London Missionary Society was established in 1795 and like most new societies it was Evangelical in outlook but it welcomed both Dissenters and Anglicans in its organisation. Perhaps the most remarkable of all the efforts made by the Missionaries in promoting the cause of Vernacular education in the early decades of the 19th century was the experiment undertaken by Rev. May of London.

9B. The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge was set up in 1699 with the principal aim of publishing and circulating Christian literature, but it also engaged in missionary work in India. The first Bishop of Calcutta Rev. Thomas Fanshawe Middleton was personally sympathetic to them and encouraged them to establish the Calcutta Diocesan Committee of the S.P.C.K. in 1815. It began its educational work in 1818, by 1823 had established two "Circles" of elementary schools in the northern and southern suburbs of Calcutta.


11. Ibid.

12. The First Committee of Management consisted of the following members:
   1. Sir E. Hyde East.
   2. J. H. Harington.
   3. W. B. Bayley.
   5. Rev. T. Thomason.
   11. G. J. Gordon.
   12. J. Robinson.
   15. E. S. Montague.
   17. Mr. Abdool Wahid.
   18. Mr. Abdool Ramid.
   19. Mr. Karam Hossain.
   20. Mr. Md. Rashid.
   22. Radhakant Deb.
   23. Mritunjoy Vidyalankar.


16. The six vernaculars were Bengali, Hindi, Urdu, Oriya, Santal and Khasia.

17. The three classical languages were Sanskrit, Arabic and Persian.

18. Ram Chandra Vidyabagish, son of Lakshminarayan Tarkabhusan born in 1786. He became a great Sanskrit scholar after he had mastered the Smriti, the upnishada and the Vedanta. He held the post of Smriti Professor at the Sanskrit College, 1827-37. He also associated with Calcutta School Book Society and in 1818 he compiled a Bengali dictionary which was highly commended by Calcutta School Book Society.


21B. Ibid.


23. Ibid.

25A. N.L.Basak, History of Vernacular Education in Bengal (1800-1854), Cal, 1874, P. 196.


29. Hodgson, Brian Houghton (1800-1894) came to India in 1818 and joined Bengal Civil Services. In a series of letters, contributed to the Friend of India and subsequently published under the challenging title, "The pro-eminence of the Vernacular: or the Anglicists answered", Hodgson pleaded with much vigour and ability for the recognition of the true place of vernacular in a national scheme of education for India.


B. H. Hodgson, op. cit, p. 264.

B. H. Hodgson, op. cit, p. 284.

L. Wilkinson, the British Political Resident of Bhopal, submitted to the General Committee of Public Instruction through the Governor-General Lord Auckland a "Minute on the best means of promoting vernacular Education, dated 5th November, 1840. In this Minute, Wilkinson strongly recommended Adam's plan and gave a comprehensive" list of original essays and translations of works required to form a complete course of vernacular Instruction in Hindi and Urdu. In his opinion, the desired books could be obtained by exciting competition, by encouraging zeal and individual efforts."

General Committee of Public Instruction - Progs Relating to Vernacular Education, 1840 (P.141-191).

B. H. Hodgson, op. cit, p. 287.

B. H. Hodgson, op. cit, p. 295.

Richey, Selections from Educational Records, Part II, Extract from "an enquiry into the system of education most likely to be generally popular in Behar and the upper provinces. P.9-10.

Friend of India, 7 May 1840.


See ante, P. 139-43.

C. E. Trevelyan, op. cit, P. 21.

Committee Report of the General Committee of the Public Instruction, 1835, P. 7-9.
43. H. Woodrow, Macaulay's Minutes on education in India, Calcutta, 1862, p. 43-44.
44. Trevelyan, op. cit, P. 25.
49. The Report of General Committee of Public Instruction, 1840, paragraph 44.
50. Richey, op. cit, Extracts from the Reports for 1840-41 and 1841-42, P. 80-82.
51. The Council of Education continued the pro-English policy of the General Committee without effective support and guidance from the Government regarding pro-vernacular policy adopted by it just on the eve of the transfer of control of Education from the General Committee to the Council of Education.
52. Richey, op. cit, Letter from the Under-Secretary to Government of Bengal to the Secretary to Sudder Board of Revenue, 18 December 1844, P. 82-86.
55. 0 0 0
56. J. Kerr, op. cit, P. 162-63.
57. 0 0 0
60. J. Kerr, op. cit, P. 165.
61. J. Kerr, op. cit, P. 166.
62. See ante, P. 153-56, 161-64.
63. J. A. Richey, op. cit, P. 65.
64. In 1823, the Gaudiya Samaj led by Radhakanta Deb, Prasanna Coomar Tagore, Ram Kamal Sen, Rasamay Datta and Tarini Charan Mitra etc. tried to further the spread of knowledge through the vernacular. The Sarba-tatva-Dipika Sabha, established in 1832 by Debendra Nath Tagore and Ramaprasad Roy, inspired the student community to organise and take part in debates in Bengali as the most suitable medium of expression of original thought. Vernacular Literature Society was founded in Calcutt in December, 1850, to publish and translate into Bengali such good books from English as to provide a sound and useful domestic vernacular Literature in Bengali.
66. To name a few of these Vernacular Presses, the Prabhakar Press (1828), the Purna-Chandradasa Press (1838) the Tattvabodhini Press (1840), the Vidya Ratna Press (1856) etc.
67. Spelt differently as Pautshahilah, Pautshaila, Pautshaila, Patshaila, and Patshaila. We will refer to it by the original form "Pautshailah".
68. The Friend of India, dt. 23.1.1840, vide Article on "The New Patshaila" from the Harkaru dt. 20.1.1840.
69. Ibid.
70. The Daily Hurkaru, 2 September 1836.
71A. The Friend of India, 23 January 1840.
71C. Samvatt Purna-Chandrodaya, 30 July 1852.
71D. N. L. Basak, History of Vernacular Education in Bengal (1800-54), Cal, 1874, P. 357.
71A. The Calcutta Courier, 3 June, 1840.
71B. Samachar Durpan, 26 January, 1839.
72. The Tattvabodhini Patrika, 1st Asvin, Sakabda 1765 (16 August 1843).
73. Akshoy Kumar Datta's "Padbartha Vidya" and "Bostu Bichar" were remarkable successes and set the model for similar works in the future.
74. J. C. Bagal, op. cit, P. 64.
75. Tattvabodhini Patrika, 1st Asvin, 1765 Saka (16 August 1843), P. 11-12.
77. N. L. Basak, op. cit, P. 368.
78. Samvadt Purna Chandrodaya, 17 April 1851.
79. Samachar Chundrika, 16 June 1845.
80. Sambad Bhaskar, 16 February 1854.
81. Sambad Bhaskar, 16 March 1854, 23 March 1854.
82. Sambad Prabhakar, 29 October 1853.
83. Sambad Purna Chandrodaya, 20 May 1852.
84. The Purna-Chandradaya, 11 January 1851.
85. Sambad Prabhakar, 14 June 1851.
86. Sambad Purna Chandrodaya, 22 May 1850.
87. Sambad Purna Chandrodaya, 23 August 1852.
88. Sambad Prabhakar, 2 November 1854.
89A. Sambad Prabhakar, 7 August 1850.
89B. J. Bagal, op. cit, P. 66.
90. Vernacular Literature Society is called also Vernacular Literature, Committee of Vernacular Translation Society in the contemporary journals like Sambad Prabhakar, Satya Pradeep and Purna Chandrodaya.
91. The Bengal Hurkaru, August 12, 1850.
92. Satya Pradeep, quoted in Bengal Hurkaru December 16, 1850.
93B. Jogesh Chandra Bagal, Banglar Navya Sanskriti, Cal, 1958, P. 46 - 47.
94. J. Long, op. cit, P. LIV.
95. J. Long, A Return of the Names and Writings of 515 persons, connected with Bengali Literature and a Catalogue of Bengali Newspapers and Periodicals, Cal, 1854.
97. Praeanna Coomar Tagore (1301-C3) was born of a prosperous Tagore family of Calcutta. Partly educated at Sherbourne
School, he joined the Hindu College in 1817 and made his mark as a brilliant student there. Started his life as the Dewan of the Tamluk Salt Board, became one of the most successful and best pleaders in the Sudder Diwani Adawlut. For his legal knowledge and forensic skill he was appointed a Government pleader in 1844.

98. Report of the General Committee of Public Instruction of the Presidency of Fort William in Bengal for 1839-40, Appendix L.

99. Gaudiya Samaj was set up in 1823 to facilitate the editing and translation of Hindu scriptures to counter Christian Missionary propaganda.


101B. N. Sinha, op. cit, P. 80.

101C. N. Sinha, op. cit, P. 89.


103. Tattvabodhini Patrika, Aswin 1775 (Sakabda).

105. Rajnarayan Basu was born in 1826 and his educational career in the Hare School and the Hindu College (1840-43) was brilliant. He left the Hindu College owing to illness and worked for Tattvabodhini Sabha from 1846-49, translating into English the Upanishads. He joined Government Education Service in May 1849 until his retirement in 1869.


107. Lal Behari Dey was born at Talpur in Burdwan on 12 December 1824. He was admitted to the General Assembly's Institution in 1834, and read there for twelve years. In 1843 Lal Behari was engaged in the service of the Free Church of Scotland from 1846 to 1867. But the most fruitful period of his career began with his joining the Government Educational Service in 1867.


110. Transactions of the Bengal Social Science Association, 1864.

111. N. Sinha, op. cit, P. 188-190.


113. Friend of India, 28 September 1854.