

E D U C A T I O N   I N   B E N G A L

1912 - 1937

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### Abstract

This thesis deals with the organisation and structure, the policies and objectives of the British educational system in Bengal from 1912 to 1937. At each level, primary, secondary and mainstream higher education, it seeks to judge the contribution, financial, political and educational, of the central and provincial governments, of the professional educators in the Indian Education Service, the Directors of Public Instruction and college principals, and of their Indian counterparts, most notably such Vice-Chancellors as Asutosh Mookerjee, together with the contributions of the politicians and publicists, both Hindu and Muslim, and of their constituents, the consumers of the education so fashioned and provided.

The first two chapters deal with change in the structure and organisation of higher education as Calcutta became a teaching university and Dacca, founded in 1921, emerged from its shadow.

Chapters three and four examine the problems of administration and control of secondary education and relate these to the financial constraints felt by government and the social and political pressures exerted by Bengali society.

Primary education forms the subject of the fifth chapter, where the problems of expansion and improvement, of quantity and quality, within a restricted budget are examined and related to the rapid enlargement in the electorate after 1919 and 1935.

The last chapter deals with education, seen again at all three levels, in terms of Muslim needs and aspirations - and of Hindu fears and opposition - relating these to problems of employment and of political power.

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## Abbreviations

BAR	Bengal Administration Report
BLCF	Bengal Legislative Council Proceedings
BNNR	Bengal Native Newspaper Reports
BQR	Quinquennial Report of the Progress of Education in Bengal
GB-Appointment	Government of Bengal - Appointment Proceedings
GB-Finance	Government of Bengal - Financial Proceedings
GB-Gen-Edn	Government of Bengal - General Proceedings, Education Department
GI-Home-Edn	Government of India - Home Proceedings, Education Department
IAR	Indian Annual Register
IQR	Quinquennial Report of the Progress of Education in India
ISC	Indian Statutory Commission (Simon Commission)

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## INTRODUCTION

This is not an all-inclusive study of Bengal education, our main concern has been with the purposes and policy, the organisation and structure of the western system of education which the British introduced, and with the efforts made by the two great communities, the Hindus and the Muslims, to adapt what was offered or imposed to their own purposes. All three major elements in the system, the primary, secondary and higher levels of instruction are dealt with - but not the specialist topics, important though they are, of professional and technical education, of female education, or of teacher training, and though something is said of the overall pattern of curricula, no attempt has been made to follow recent example and examine the changing intellectual content of the education given through an analysis of text-books and examination papers. Many of these topics are technical, several are self-contained, for some source-material is very patchy - but more important, neither time nor space allowed their investigation.<sup>1</sup>

1912 has been chosen as <sup>the</sup> starting point for this study since it is from this date that Bengal becomes a compact administrative and linguistic unit and acquires a homogeneity which makes a statistical approach reasonably easy, though it is unfortunate that the 1911 Census was taken while Bengal was still divided while that of 1941 was incomplete. The coming into practical effect of the constitutional changes of 1935 in 1937 provides the excuse for halting at the latter date. The twenty five years covered saw two major financial disasters for the cause of education - the first World War, with its attendant shortages, inflation and debt and the world slump which made its impact from 1929 onwards; saw two periods of political disruption - the Non-Co-operation Movement and the Civil Disobedience Movement, both of which distorted

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1. Though at all points the constraints imposed by finance have been touched upon - as for example in considering the outcome of the Calcutta University Commission's radical proposals - no separate study has been included. A separate paper on finance has been written and is to be submitted for publication

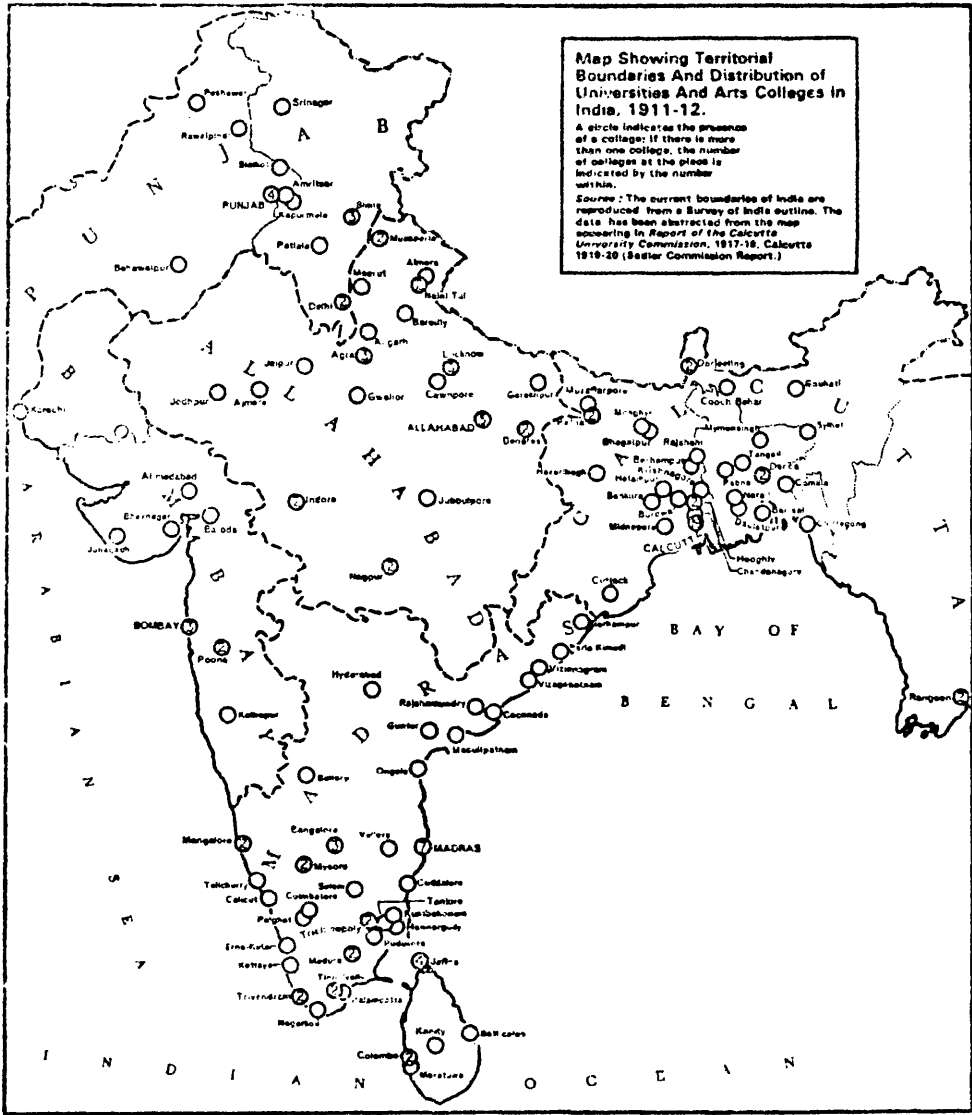
educational policies very markedly in Bengal; saw the creation of the new universities, those of Dacca and Patna within the area hitherto under Calcutta University's jurisdiction, and in Calcutta itself a shift from being a purely examining institution to one actively teaching at post-graduate level, and finally saw with the introduction of Dyarchy the extinction of the role of the Government of India in provincial education, and far more importantly, the beginning of mass politics, which in Bengal also meant the beginning of communal politics, in education as in all other spheres. I was warned by friends in Calcutta when I began this study, that nothing of interest happened in Bengal education in my chosen period and that the nineteenth century would have been far more exciting. Even the brief outline above suggests that interesting things were happening - but it can perhaps be said that many forces and pressures tended in this period to cancel one another out, so that in the absence of clear, dramatic movement the straining effort of the tug-of-war is not easily seen.

Sometimes the pull is within government itself, as when the Home Government, the Government of India and the Government of Bengal struggle each in turn to save something of the reforming impulse of Sadler but to put the burden of paying for change on another's shoulders. Or it may be within a community - westernised Calcutta-based Muslim leaders denouncing the blinkering obscurantism to be found in maktabas or madrassas while the more orthodox Eastern Bengal presses for more special institutions; Muslims both seek more employment and to pursue an education which unfits them for it, now complaining of the lack of Muslim University teachers, then hounding out Abul Hussain from Dacca for his questioning of traditional dogma or passing over Humayun Kabir in favour of a comparative nonentity more acceptable to the orthodox. At times the conflict is within a single individual - as in the case of Asutosh Mookerjee, more often it involves a whole series of interests : the professional educators, the DPIs or college principals like H.R. James, the bureaucrats, provincial

and all-India of the Education, Home and Finance departments who are usually at cross-purposes, and the politicians, Congress, League or Krishak Praja. If the end result of all these forces at work is often stalemate, they were powerful forces all the same.

Warnings about the choice of period would have been perhaps more valid if they had referred to the source materials available for my study. There is a sharp divide at 1920 in the quality and depth of government records. Before that date the central government's links with education in the provinces, and with Calcutta University in particular, had been close enough to produce a strong flow of 'A' and even some 'B' proceedings to Delhi and to London : after 1920 those links snapped, and holdings in the India Office Library and Records and in the National Archives of India became quite thin. When I reached Delhi, after a seven month wait for a visa, and then penetrated into the National Archives, after a five weeks wait for a pass, I thus found the pre-Dyarchy records very fruitful, but those post-1920 inadequate. Unhappily, though I was able to spend eight months in Calcutta, in the State Archives and the National Library, it did not prove possible to make good the shortfall in the records at Delhi and London. The Record Department of the Bengal Government wielded a very sharp axe upon the records of the education department after it had become a transferred subject, periodically weeding out the great bulk of the 'B' proceedings. To my great regret I was unable to see any of the records of the Calcutta University which at that time was passing through a very difficult period : its constitution had been dissolved by the State Government and the University administration was faced with sit-ins, strikes and chronic staff shortages. (The records would have not been easy to use, since they are not arranged for research and the record-room staff is much preoccupied with current work, but in this period to use them was impossible.) The journal and newspaper holdings of the National Library, like those of the Bangla Academy and the University

Library at Dacca, were of considerable assistance, however. I was able personally to discuss aspects of my work with individuals in Calcutta and Dacca who had been directly connected with education in my period, and their comments were most useful both in bringing records to life and in helping me to interpret them. In India, however, my search for private papers was almost fruitless : the Asutosh Mookerjee collection in the National Library is largely domestic in content, and I was told that the more significant and revealing papers on his vital role in the University had been kept back by his heirs. The search for private papers of Indian Education Ministers such as Fazlul Huq, P.C. Mitter, Azizul Haque drew a blank. The private papers of Sir Harcourt Butler, Lord Chelmsford and Sir P.T. Hartog were, however, of much use. For secondary education, and for primary education in so far as any records survive at that lowest level, it might have been possible to reach to greater depths by visiting district headquarter towns and investigating collectorate, municipal and district board holdings. These too, however, have been drastically weeded, are often ill maintained, for research purposes anyway, while it is difficult for a woman to travel about the country. To supplement central and provincial records I have therefore drawn to some extent upon Bengali novels and autobiographies of the period.





## Chapter I

Western education in Bengal had its origin in the schools and colleges founded by Indians and by European missionaries in the early years of the nineteenth century<sup>1</sup>. By the year 1853 - when the British Parliament renewed the charter of the East India Company for the last time - it had taken definite root in Bengal. However though Government made some financial provision for education and by 1853 had opened some schools and colleges of its own, acting through a Council of Education, there was still no effective administrative machinery for co-ordinating the efforts of the various bodies. During the parliamentary debates on the charter witnesses with a knowledge of India highlighted the need for such machinery<sup>2</sup>. Next year came the

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1. The Hindu College and Hindu School, founded at Calcutta in 1817, were the first institutions in Bengal offering western education through English. David Hare and Raja Ram Mohan Roy were the leading members of the group behind these institutions. In 1818 the Baptists opened Serampur College - the first missionary college in Bengal. In 1820 Bishop's College was opened by the Anglicans at Sibpur. In 1830 Alexander Duff, the Scottish scholar and missionary, founded a school in Calcutta named the General Assembly's Institution, the predecessor of the Scottish Churches College and School. After 1835 Government stepped in by establishing high schools in each district. The activities of missionaries and Hindu reformers in Calcutta had an interesting parallel in London where the establishment of the secular University College (1828) was immediately followed by the opening of the church-dominated King's College (1829). Both aimed at making higher education cheaper and more accessible than at Cambridge or Oxford but they also represented opposing ideals. The establishment of London University in 1836 was designed to enable these conflicting forces to co-ordinate their activities in the interest of higher education. See H.C. Dent, Universities in Transition.

2. The most important of the witnesses were Sir Charles Trevelyan (Macaulay's brother-in-law), J.C. Marshman, son of one of the founders of Serampur College and Alexander Duff. In the ideas, and even in the phrasing, of this despatch the influence of Duff is quite evident. See R.J. Moore, Sir Charles Wood's Indian Policy 1853-66, 108-123 and 'The Composition of Wood's Education Despatch' E.H.R., LXXX (1965) 70-85.

historic education despatch of Sir Charles Wood which recommended the creation of a properly articulated system of education from primary school to university. For this the despatch required every province to have its own Department of Public Instruction headed by a Director with a staff of inspectors. Further, the Despatch advocated the establishment of regional universities at Calcutta, Bombay and Madras, to be constituted on the model of London University. That University at the time was a purely examining body which accepted for its tests only those trained in institutions affiliated to it. The system seemed peculiarly suitable to the conditions then obtaining in Bengal; one of its great merits was, of course, its cheapness. But it was also expected to provide an impartial administrative body for all the institutions whether governmental, missionary or Indian. This would ensure freedom to non-government colleges - all of them, at the time were run by missionaries - to manage their own internal affairs.

The three Indian universities were founded in 1857 as purely examining bodies, not as centres of instruction. They were responsible for prescribing courses of study, conducting examinations and awarding degrees. The universities were organised as corporations quite distinct from the widely scattered colleges in which the actual teaching of students was done. The only relationship established between the university and the colleges was that of affiliation, by which authority was given to the affiliated institutions to offer instruction and to put up candidates for examination. The colleges did not have the right to be consulted about the courses prescribed or the form of examinations, and the universities did not have the power to inspect affiliated colleges

As a basis of organisation for higher education such a system suffers from a number of disadvantages. In such a system the concept of a university as a place of learning where a body of scholars come together

for the training of students and the advancement of knowledge is lost sight of - the Indian universities in their early form, therefore, were not centres of teaching and scholarship. Each university was a collection of administrative boards without direct contact with the work of teaching done in the colleges. Moreover, the system with its uniform curricula and undue emphasis upon examination confined the colleges to a narrow pattern<sup>1</sup>.

However the system offered the easiest solution of the problem of providing university education - as it appeared in 1857. At that date the colleges were few in number, they were all either missionary or government managed and funded, the admissions were restricted and on the whole they were reasonably well-equipped. But the growing demand for English education and Government's adoption of a policy of encouraging private enterprise on the recommendation of the Education Commission of 1882 resulted in the rise of many unendowed colleges which, having no other sources of income save tuition fees, were under pressure to admit students without limit or scrutiny<sup>2</sup>. Some of the colleges were run on a purely commercial basis with a consequent tendency to economise at the expense of staff and students. There were no clearly defined standards as to staff, equipment or boarding accommodation for non-local students which the university could insist upon before or after granting recognition. The collegiate system, under weight of numbers, fell into disorder.

And if the sprawling system of affiliated colleges in Bengal had become chaotic, the central administration had grown unwieldy. The rapid development of both high schools and colleges from 1882 onwards put the University

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1. The narrowness was increased by the marked literary bias in the choice of subjects and in their teaching. This had not been intended by Wood but followed from the presence of the bias in Oxford and Cambridge and in Indian tradition and from the higher outlays required for the teaching of science and technology. At Calcutta medicine provided a partial exception.

2. Even before 1882, the demand for education, particularly secondary, had acquired so great a momentum of its own that the Department of Public Instruction in Bengal was unable to control it. The Commission, therefore, did not initiate a great new departure, but merely brought into prominence and allowed greater freedom of action to forces already at work.

organisation, unchanged since 1857, under severe strain. The executive authority of the University was vested in the Senate consisting of the Chancellor, the Vice-Chancellor and the Fellows appointed by the Chancellor<sup>1</sup>. There was no limit upon the membership of the supreme body, the Senate, in which all powers were vested. Consequently, by the turn of the century, the Senate, and this was true of all three universities, had swollen to unmanageable proportions. Thus in 1902, the Calcutta Senate had no less than 196 members. Fellowships, wrote Lord Curzon in 1901, in his Minute on University Reform, had come to be a sort of titular reward, conferred without much reference to the academic qualifications of the recipient, but rather as a stage of promotion in an Indian career<sup>2</sup>. Unhappily members of the Senate sat for life. Prominent Englishmen and Indians were honoured, but the former, Curzon noted, "as a rule recognise no answering obligation" and the distinction that a fellowship reflected was official or professional rather than academic<sup>3</sup>. Teachers were present in the Senate or its executive, the Syndicate, by accident rather than as of right; many colleges went unrepresented. The academic bodies, the Faculties and Boards of Studies responsible for drawing up syllabuses and prescribing text-books, were appointed by the Senate from among their own members, often persons with no special expertise in the subjects concerned. The control of the University over the colleges had become less instead of more efficient owing to the composition and size of the Senate<sup>4</sup>.

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1. Unlike other Indian universities, the University of Calcutta was till 1921 under the control of the Government of India with the Viceroy as the Chancellor and with a Vice-Chancellor who was a Government of India appointee.

2. GI - Home - Edn., A122 - 129, Dec. 1901.

3. Ibid.

4. One problem was that proprietors of both colleges and hostels had secured election to the Senate, and used their position to defend their institutions from reform.

It was widely believed that the standards of examination had deteriorated, although it was difficult to prove.

These were important considerations which formed the background to Curzon's university reforms but they were by no means the only ones. Educational opinion in India was also subjected to the influence of re-thinking in Europe about the purposes and structures of universities. In particular it was affected by the findings of the two Royal Commissions of 1888 and 1894 on the working of London University and their embodiment in 1898 in an Act of Parliament which transformed the University into a teaching body, though it still retained the system of examination for external students. These modifications were by no means final - another Royal Commission reconsidered the whole problem in 1908. Meanwhile the Act of 1898 seemed to have an obvious applicability to India : in 1902 as in 1857 educational wisdom was to be sought in London.

In the Indian discussions that preceded the passing of the Universities Act of 1904 one could discern the influence of four strains of thought underlying the London changes<sup>1</sup>. The first was the belief that a university's proper function is to teach. The second asserted that only a well-staffed and equipped college should enjoy the full privileges of teaching. The third aimed at the close association of teachers with the management of the university and the fourth that the principal governing body of the university - known in London, as in India, as the Senate - should be of reasonable size.

Educational considerations had an important bearing on Curzon's educational reforms but he also had strong political motives although he disclaimed them, a little disingenuously<sup>2</sup>. His main target was the

1. The creation of two federal university structures, the Victoria University in northern England in 1881 and the University of Wales in 1893, seem not to have influenced thinking in India about forms of university.

2. Lord George Hamilton, the Secretary of State for India, wrote to Curzon, "I admire the skill with which you absolutely ignored in your address (at the Simla Conference in 1901) the political dangers of the present system and based the necessity of reforms upon educational grounds alone." Hamilton to Curzon - 25 Sept. 1901. Curzon Papers (160).

Calcutta University which more than any other Indian university had "fallen into the hands of a coterie of obscure native lawyers who regard educational questions from a political point of view"<sup>1</sup>. In particular the Senate had become a "chief arena of public discussion" and a number of "ambitious pleaders anxious for opportunities of winning status and popularity"<sup>2</sup> had created a state of affairs in which a good deal of university business was settled in the Bar Library and in the High Court. Curzon had no intention of allowing the Senate to develop into "a potent political instrument wielded by ill-educated vakils"<sup>3</sup>, especially as behind the lawyers with their strong anti-government views was a "crowd of their kindred and co-religionists" who wished to obtain "cheap degrees and multiply colleges of an unsatisfactory type". If not checked in time the Indian universities would run the risk of developing into "nurseries of discontented characters and stunted brains".<sup>4</sup> The Act of 1904 was intended to dispel that danger.

As for the government of the University, the Act retained the Senate as the supreme governing body. But its size was reduced to a maximum of 100 and a minimum of fifty Ordinary Fellows, together with not more than ten ex-officio Fellows. This ex-officio element included the

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1. GI-Home-Edn., A34-32, Feb 1904, quoted in J.H. Broomfield, Elite Conflict in a Plural Society: Twentieth Century Bengal, 26.

2. Calcutta University Commission Report (hereafter Sadler Report) 1, 63.

3. Quoted by Aparna Basu - The Growth of Education and Political Development in India - 1898 - 1920, 15.

4. Ibid.

Director of Public Instruction for Bengal. Ten members were to be elected by the Faculties (themselves mainly composed of Senators) and ten by the graduates; the remainder were to be nominated by the Chancellor. At least two-fifths of the members of the Senate were to be teachers; but no provision was made for the direct representation of the teachers or of the affiliated colleges<sup>1</sup>.

Under the Senate were to be Faculties consisting of members of the Senate together with a limited number of co-opted members. The Syndicate, the executive body of the University was given statutory recognition in the Act. It was to be a small body with not more than seventeen members with the Vice-Chancellor, its Chairman, and the Bengal Director of Public Instruction, members ex-officio. Teachers were strongly represented, numbering at the minimum one less than a majority, while they might constitute an actual majority, though only teachers who were members of the Senate were eligible. The Act thus, in fact gave to teachers, or to those teachers who by election and nomination became members of the Senate, a real say in the management of the University.

But the most important and certainly the most controversial result of the Act was to make government control and supervision of the University more direct and effective than before. Not only was the Viceroy as Chancellor, empowered to nominate the great bulk of the members of the Senate, the election of the remaining twenty was subject to his approval and the Government of India retained the power, conferred upon it by the Act of 1857, of vetoing any appointment. The Vice-Chancellor, the chief executive officer of the University was to be appointed by the Government : all regulations of the University

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1. These provisions applied to Bombay and Madras Universities too.

needed government approval; Government had the final authority over all affiliation and disaffiliation of colleges; all teaching appointments had to be approved by the Government - in short almost every detail of University policy was, in theory, brought under government control.

Other important reforms concerned the provision for each of the colleges to have a governing body with some teacher representation on it. But the most important change affecting the colleges flowed from the new rules of affiliation. Instead of being affiliated in general terms, the colleges now were to be affiliated for particular subjects and up to defined stages of instruction. Moreover, all the colleges had to have their existing affiliation renewed under the new rules. This in turn meant that, subject to government approval, the University could now disaffiliate a college in a particular subject at a particular grade instead of imposing total disaffiliation - which hitherto had been an ineffective power because of its drastic nature. Moreover, provision was made for periodical inspection of and report on the colleges, which were also required to notify all changes in their staff. The Act, for the first time laid down, as one of the conditions of affiliation, that a college must make satisfactory arrangements for residence in the college or in approved lodgings of students not living with their parents or guardians.

Indian opposition to the Act, most passionately felt in Bengal, was fierce. There ensued a protracted and bitter controversy over university legislation in which the native press played an important role. It was strongly felt that the tightening of government control over the University, the new rules for affiliation of colleges and for students' residence and the emphasis upon a high scale of tuition fees had one aim - "to glorify Government officials and cut down the independence and narrow the scope of the usefulness of the public



at large..... We are told how Government directly and indirectly may and can control, supervise and practically repress higher education, but nowhere are we told that Government will be bound to promote education in any direction." As the horse said "If you really wish me to look well give me less of your currying and more of your corn."<sup>1</sup> This increased measure of government control was quite contrary to the hopes and aspirations which educated Hindu Bengalis had begun by that date to entertain. As the official chronicler of the University wrote some fifty years later, "The middle class of Bengal, intellectually alert, socially progressive, politically ambitious, converted an 'aristocratic institution' into a 'popular institution' by a steady process of penetration. When, by the beginning of the present century it was prepared to take charge of the 'popular institution' it found Curzon obstructing the way."<sup>2</sup> Even if one ignores the fulsome praise showered on the dominant Bengali Hindu elite of the period, the fact remains that they really did consider themselves sufficiently advanced to demand and sustain such a role. For the first time the question of Calcutta University had become a "national issue" to the educated Bengali Hindus.

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1. Ramananda Chatterjee, 'The Indian Universities Bill' Hindustan Review and Kayastha Samachar, VIII-6, (Dec 1903), 548-68. (Hereafter Hindustan Review)

The Indian National Congress, expressed its "gravest alarm" at the "new educational policy" as it came to be called by the Indian press and public. See - Resolution No 9 Ahmedabad 1902; Resolution No 11, Madras 1903; Resolution No 13 - Bombay 1904. D. Chakrabarty and C. Bhattacharyya, ed.

Congress in Evolution - A Collection of Congress Resolutions, 128-136.

"There are reasons to fear", said G.K. Gokhale, member of the Imperial Legislative Council from Bombay, "that in the hands of the reconstituted Senates and Syndicates, these provisions will operate to the prejudice of indigenous enterprise in the field of higher education." - Hundred Years of the University of Calcutta, I, 167.

2. Of Bengali Hindu involvement in educational activities Broomfield,<sup>8</sup> writes, "Most men of consequence in the community in the late nineteenth century were involved with educational administration, whether in a rural district, a Mufussil town, or in Calcutta; and educational politics, particularly the politics of Calcutta University, assumed extraordinary importance for the bhadralok as one of the few avenues of constructive public endeavour open to them in their circumscribed colonial society."

Government had three aims in formulating the Act of 1904: to re-establish its control over higher education, to raise the standard of that education, and to restrict or diminish the importance of private institutions in the system. The three aims were interconnected. There was growing Government concern at the rising output of school and college students for whom government service and the law could no longer provide employment. The connection between "cheap (so-called higher) education to very large numbers of the lower middle class whose moral and intellectual standard is too low to allow of their assimilating the fare provided for their consumption" and the discontent and sedition of disappointed youth, Law noted, was as evident in India as it was in Russia<sup>1</sup>. There was concern, too, at inadequate staffing and equipment in many second-grade private colleges and its concomitant reliance on cramming, the result, it was argued, of a competitive lowering of fees by colleges run on commercial lines. The Universities Commission had suggested as a solution a compulsory raising of college fees<sup>2</sup>, the Act relied rather on tougher affiliation and inspection procedures. But the weeding out of undesirable colleges and an insistence upon higher standards was something which Government could not effect directly: politically it would have been unwise and administratively nearly impossible. If, as R.G. Elles, the Military Member wished, higher education was to become "a reality in the few rather than a sham in the many as is now the case in Bengal", the instrument must be the University<sup>3</sup>. And that implied Government control

1. Sir E. Fitzgerald Law, Member, Council of Governor-General 1900-1905  
GI - Home - Edn. A67-86. Dec.1903.

2. Gurudas Banerjee, the Indian member of the Universities Commission had entered a Note of Dissent objecting to the exclusion of poor students - a group which Curzon wished "politely to suppress". (GI - Home - Edn. A47 Nov. 1903). On this Ramananda Chatterjee commented in the Hindustan Review, "The Anglo-Indian mind labours under two wrong impressions with regard to fees. First that higher education is too cheap in India; second, that unless students pay fees, they do not sufficiently value the teaching they receive.....education on the whole is dear, considering the means of the generality of students".

The Indian Universities Bill, Hindustan Review, VIII,6(Dec 1903)548-68.  
3. GI - Home - Edn. - A67-86,Dec.1903. Major-General Sir E.R.Elles, Military Member 1901 - 1905.

of the University. As T.A. Raleigh, the President of the Commission, had commented, "If the scheme is to work we must have a majority in the Senate", adding in a confidential note that this required that membership of the new Senate should turn upon competence to form an opinion on university questions and upon "soundness which from our point of view means willingness to admit that reforms are needed and to co-operate in carrying out our policy"<sup>1</sup>.

The first Senate of Calcutta University elected and appointed under the Act of 1904 included 41 European and 43 Indian Ordinary Fellows plus 12 ex-officio members, all of whom were in that period Europeans. There was thus a European majority on the Senate, including many government officials. Moreover, of the Indian members many were nominated<sup>2</sup>, and Fellows were no longer elected or appointed for life, which had conferred a certain independence upon them, but for a period of five years, though with the possibility of re-appointment<sup>3</sup>. Some vacancies occurred every year, to be filled on the recommendation of the Vice-Chancellor, but in the first ten years, of the 166 vacancies so occurring 91 were filled by Europeans<sup>4</sup>. Raleigh's requirement might seem to have been fully met. Nevertheless the Act of 1904 from Government's point of view proved a failure. Instead of bringing Calcutta University under more efficient government control the Act paved the way for the Bengali Hindus to dominate the affairs of the University. Nor in the event could higher education be restricted or standards generally raised. This totally unforeseen development was due, ironically, to a man who had been one of the leading critics of the Indian Universities Bill. It was the skill, ingenuity, shrewdness

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1. GI - Home - Edn. - A27-40 Sept. 1904. T.A. Raleigh, Note of 8 Mar 1904.

2. IGR, 1902-07. I.10.

3. "We are sincerely afraid that if nominated Fellowships be terminable, Government would get rid not of incompetent Fellows, but of competent independent ones." R. Chatterjee 'The Indian Universities Bill', Hindustan Review, VIII.6 (Dec.1903).

4. Hundred Years of the University of Calcutta, 472-79.

and determination of Asutosh Mookerjee which ensured that the Act was so used as to produce a result quite contrary to the Act's original aims.

Asutosh Mookerjee, a Kulin Brahman by caste, was the son of a wealthy physician of Calcutta. When he was appointed to the Vice-Chancellorship,<sup>1</sup> the second Indian to be so appointed, he was already a well-known figure in Bengali Society. Socially he had everything an ambitious Bengali Hindu needed to rise to the top - high caste, a father and engineer uncle who were well-known members of the Calcutta professional world, a distinguished academic career at the elite Presidency College, an active involvement in University affairs, a lucrative legal practice and finally membership of the High Court Bench. In his original field of mathematics he stood first at Calcutta in both B.A and M.A and, as his admirer H.H. Risley noted, he acquired "a European reputation and the results of his original researches have been embodied with his name in the standard Cambridge text-books".<sup>2</sup> Successive Vice-Chancellors paid public tribute to his gifts and Gurudas Banerjee tried to establish a chair in Mathematics for him at the University. He became the first student to have a double M.A when he took his degree in Physics in 1886, was awarded the Premchand Roychand Studentship, the blue riband of the University, and from 1887 became a regular lecturer at the Indian Association for the Cultivation of Science. But not content he moved into the greener pastures of the Law, taking his B.L. at City College in 1888 and building up a lucrative practice. This did not prevent him from maintaining a close and active interest in the affairs of the University.

Asutosh had acquired a useful body of support within the University - several of his Presidency College teachers were members of the Senate or otherwise influential. Gurudas Banerjee was an enthusiastic supporter,

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1. The Vice-Chancellorship carried no salary with it but was an immensely respectable job which more often than not was adorned by distinguished judges of the Calcutta High Court. The first Indian Vice-Chancellor Gurudas Banerjee (1890-1892) was also a judge.

2. GI - Home - Edn. All7-122 March 1906.

S.P. Sinha, the first Indian member of the Governor-General's Council was Asutosh's <sup>e</sup>teacher at the City College, and it was under Rashbehari Ghosh that Asutosh served his articleship. He was a member of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, a commissioner of the Calcutta Corporation and both a member of the Senate, having been personally recommended to Lord Lansdowne, the Chancellor, by C.P. Ilbert,<sup>1</sup> and of the Syndicate, for which he was backed by Professor Booth at Presidency and Mr. Justice O'Kinealy of the High Court, all by the age of 25, that is by 1889.

He was assiduous in his attention to university affairs, attending every meeting of the Syndicate and the Faculties of Arts and Law. His rewards included a very useful university examinership in Mathematics and Law, the presidentship of the Board of Studies in Mathematics, a seat in the Bengal Legislative Council representing the University from 1899 to 1903, and in the Imperial Legislative Council 1903 - 1904. In the Bengal Legislative Council he emerged as a champion of the Calcutta Corporation by his opposition to the Mackenzie Bill intended to establish official and European mercantile control of the Corporation - but unlike Surendranath Banerjee "did not burn his boats",<sup>2</sup> Similarly as the local member for Bengal on the Indian Universities Commission of 1902 his defence of Bengali interests in higher education won him much popularity but in the end he voted neither for nor against the Bill after a long and learned speech which, it was said "might as well have been made by a supporter of the Bill as by an opponent thereof".<sup>3</sup> His well judged moderation was a prelude to his appointment in 1904 as a judge of the High Court at Calcutta, and that in turn made him a more eligible candidate for the Vice-Chancellorship

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1. The Government recommendation described him as "the most distinguished mathematician the Calcutta University has yet produced".  
N.K. Sinha, Asutosh Mookerjee, 57-58.

2. Ibid., 18.

3. Sachchidananda Sinha, Hindustan Review X.4, (April 1904), 399.

when Alexander Pedler's term ended early in 1906. Herbert Hope Risley, the Home Secretary and A.H.L. Fraser, the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal both were convinced that Asutosh with his academic reputation and detailed knowledge of university affairs was by far the best person for the Vice-Chancellorship<sup>1</sup>. They trusted him to carry out the policy of the Government in university matters. In the Syndicate, said Risley, he was on the side of sound education and in a confidential statement before the University Commission Asutosh had condemned the systematic lowering of standards. The appointment of a distinguished Indian as Vice-Chancellor would be popular, Risley believed, and would go a long way to dispel the widely held suspicion that the sole purpose of university legislation was to tighten official control over the universities. Finally, to have a High Court judge, rather than a government official as Vice-Chancellor would be an excellent check on the troublesome pleaders who formed the political faction in the Senate but who had to appear before him in court. On 31 March 1906 Asutosh began the first of his four terms as Vice-Chancellor of Calcutta University.

From the very start he justified his choice as Vice-Chancellor. Because of deliberate obstruction by a section of the Indian Fellows, the reconstituted Senate failed to produce within the year prescribed by the Act the University Regulations needed for the detailed administration of the University. This group whom Risley referred to as "the popular party"<sup>2</sup> - was led by Surendranath Banerjee, then the undisputed leader of the anti-partition agitation in Bengal. (He was elected to the Senate by the registered graduates). Some of the group were proprietors of schools, colleges or student lodging houses who disliked the stricter and more expensive rules of affiliation, recognition, governing bodies

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1. Asutosh's appointment as judge meant a considerable reduction in his income, but it gave valuable official status. (It is said that he accepted it on the understanding that this would make him a more acceptable candidate for the Vice-Chancellorship). Hundred Years, 222.

2. GI - Home - Edn., A83-106. June 1906. Risley's note, 2 Feb 1906.

and students residence in the draft regulations. Besides, opposition to any government sponsored measure, when anti-government sentiment was very strong, was sure to win them popularity as a patriotic gesture. So the Government of India had to intervene by appointing a Senate Committee of its own choice with the new Vice-Chancellor as its Chairman - this Committee finished the task within a short time to the complete satisfaction of the Government. The tone of the Vice-Chancellor's Convocation addresses was well judged. He staked the University's claim to integrate the colleges within its system and to insist upon efficiency, while assuring them of sympathy with their problems and promising to respect their internal autonomy. He stressed the need to care for the "moral and physical welfare" of students as well as their intellectual discipline in admirably Victorian tones and denounced "hasty cram" and the abuses of the Examination System with the voice of Curzon. Indeed his stress upon the paramountcy of European knowledge taught through the medium of English - "through western gates and not through lattice work in eastern windows" - had a reassuring echo of Macaulay about it. And if he urged a genuine pride in Indian civilization he added the warning that studies should not be disturbed by extra-academic elements: practical politics is the business of men, not of boys<sup>1</sup>. His assumption of office coincided with the beginning of the Swadeshi agitation which saw student and teacher agitation on a large scale. Most of these people belonged to the unaided colleges over which government control was indirect and limited to refusing affiliation or discontinuing existing affiliation. In its fight

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1. See Convocation Addresses of 1907 and 1908, Mookerjee, Addresses, Literary and Academic, 1 - 27 and 28 - 56.

against Swadeshi Government looked, for an ally, to the University which was in closer touch with the unaided colleges. Asutosh moved cautiously. Although generally in sympathy with the aims of the Nationalists he disagreed with their methods and believed that the involvement of students and teachers in politics would only harm the progress of education. He was too much of a traditionalist to approve of the National Education Movement<sup>1</sup> which tried to organise a number of schools outside the Departmental system with an emphasis on patriotism, Indian culture and technical education. In 1908, he secretly suggested to Risley and the Bengal Governor E.N. Baker that political activists like Surendranath Banerjee, Heramba Chandra Maitra and Krishnakumar Mitra<sup>2</sup> should have nothing to do with education and that teachers in colleges should not get involved in politics.<sup>3</sup> In his convocation speech in March 1910 also he condemned the association of teachers with political movements.<sup>4</sup> By these utterances he earned the gratitude of a harassed government.

On the other hand, in dealing with the offending institutions Asutosh was much less strict and in many cases he personally intervened to soften

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1. The National Education Movement (1905-1915) arose out of the dissatisfaction of many thoughtful Indians with the Departmental system of education. The leaders included Satish Chandra Mukherjee, Gurudas Banerjee, Aravinda Ghosh, Rabindranath Tagore and many others. The existing system, they felt, was too official, too denationalised and too literary. Accordingly, a number of schools were established - in its hey-day in 1908 there were 150 primary and intermediate National Schools; twenty secondary schools and one National College of Education. The National Council of Education, the body which managed the Schools and the College, aspired, after functioning as a full-fledged University, eventually to replace the Calcutta University. However, the movement proved short-lived. Apart from lack of adequate planning and funds, the pull of the official system proved too strong. For a detailed but uncritical account see Haridas and Uma Mukherjee, The Origins of the National Education Movement.

2. Surendranath Banerjee, the politician, was the proprietor of Ripon College and Heramba Chandra Maitra was the Principal of the City College - both colleges were large private colleges in Calcutta. Krishnakumar Mitra, the Editor of Sanjivani was also a college teacher.

3. GI-Edn., A85-94, October 1913.

4. Asutosh Mookerjee, Addresses, Literary and Academic, 98-105.



the harshness of the punitive measures suggested by the officials of the Government. Apart from his genuine desire to protect colleges and schools from extinction he was also anxious not to antagonise Bengali public opinion too much by dealing harshly with the institutions concerned. The case of the Brajomohon College at Barisal ~~would~~<sup>s</sup> illustrate the point. The district of Barisal in Eastern Bengal became, during the Swadeshi period, one of the most important centres of agitation. Inevitably, the college, founded by Aswinikumar Datta, a leading Swadeshi politician, was drawn into the movement. The Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam withdrew scholarship rights from the college - i.e., students of the college were denied Government scholarships to which they were otherwise entitled because of good performance in public examinations<sup>1</sup>. Henry Sharp, the then Director of Public Instruction, Eastern Bengal and Assam, sought an assurance from Aswinikumar Datta that the college would not in future allow its students to participate in political activities which the government considered seditious. Datta declined and thereupon Eastern Bengal in June 1907 approached the Government of India for disaffiliation of the college. The Government of India, the final authority for disaffiliation, preferred not to pursue the matter beyond issuing a formal warning to the college. Faced with persistent reminders from Eastern Bengal, Asutosh proposed the creation of a new government college in Barisal before disaffiliation of the Brajomohon College. The Government of India not only refused this but finally proceeded to issue a disaffiliation order in January 1908. Having got wind of the proposal, Asutosh, after an interview with Aswinikumar, personally saw Minto and H.H. Risley and appraised them of the situation. A disaffiliation proposal in the

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1. GI - Edn. A1-2, May 1912. See also The Modern Review, XI.3, (Mar 1912) 326. The journal reported that Devaprasad Ghosh, a student of the B.M. College, was refused a government scholarship even though he topped or almost topped the list in successive public examinations.

Syndicate, apart from generating undesirable publicity, would be difficult to get approved - already three Syndics (including two Europeans) fearing public criticism had refused to stick their necks out in support of such a proposal. They would very much leave it to the Government "to bell the nationalist cat"<sup>1</sup>. As an alternative, Asutosh proposed an inspection of the college by a University team of Inspectors. The matter was considered important enough for the Private Secretary to the Viceroy to write to Eastern Bengal emphasizing Asutosh's promise to appoint reliable Inspectors to carry out a searching inspection into the conduct of the college.

Asutosh chose the Inspectors carefully - H.R. James, the Principal of the Presidency College, J.A. Cunningham, the Professor of Chemistry at Presidency College and P.K. Roy, the then Inspector of Colleges with the University and a former principal of Presidency College - all were members of the Senate. The fact was that the two Europeans, although Government employees, were well-known for their pro-Indian sympathies. Cunningham admired Aswinikumar, so much so that when the latter was deported in 1909 for seditious activities, Cunningham in a letter to a journalist friend in England strongly condemned the measure. He was severely reprimanded and was moved to an insignificant post in the Central Provinces<sup>2</sup>. As for Henry James, he "has always gone on the popular side in the University and lectured upon the excellencies of national schools while in England"<sup>3</sup> - complained Henry Sharp bitterly. These were "unfortunate selections". The third member P.K. Roy seemed to have been the only one who took any trouble to look into the past conduct of the college:

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1. GI - Edn., A1-2, May 1912.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

the inspection report did not touch upon the subject at all.

James did not consider that it was their business to do so and Cunningham "knew positively that a number of these charges (of misconduct) were baseless fabrications".<sup>1</sup>

So nothing was done. Next, the Syndicate after receiving a strong protest from Eastern Bengal, proposed a quasi-judicial body to sit in Calcutta to conduct a public enquiry in which the Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam would appear as the prosecutor. The scheme fell through because of Eastern Bengal's opposition and the Government of India refused to grant any further extension of affiliation. In the middle of 1910, Calcutta University, while recommending a further extension, reported the formation of a Board of Trustees which would guarantee future good conduct. But Eastern Bengal disputed this. By now, the college which had so long warded off direct intervention was beginning to feel the pinch of the indirect pressure that the local government had brought to bear upon it - the deprivation of scholarship rights and the unpublicised refusal by Government to employ any student who had been at the college during the whole troublesome period, affected enrolment at the college. The number of students fell from 239 in 1907-1908 to 168 in 1909. The local government then stepped in with a non-recurring grant of Rs.100,000 and promised a substantial recurring grant-in-aid and in return it secured the privilege of nominating three out of the eleven members of the College Council. To this were granted full powers with two reservations (i) that the President of the Council should be approved by Government during the first ten years, (ii) that approval of the Education Department was required for all appointments to the staff, the scale of fees, the course of studies, and the general administration. No doubt the college was ultimately brought under

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1. GI - Edn., A1-2, May 1912.

control, the University could only delay the outcome. But in the process, as Sharp ruefully admitted, it was the local government which "had to bear all the abuse of the nationalist press which the University cleverly evaded"<sup>1</sup>. The Modern Review in 1909 criticised the "officialised University" for forcing Lalit Mohon Das a teacher of Calcutta City College to resign "at the bidding of the Bengal government" because of his political activities<sup>2</sup>. Three years later, however, the same journal noted that attempts by the Eastern Bengal Government at disaffiliation of institutions had been frustrated "by the just, liberal and firm attitude of the Calcutta University"<sup>3</sup>. The process of identification of the University with the spirit of Indian nationalism in the popular imagination had already begun.

This brings us to a second major source of conflict between the University and the Government of India - the appointment of teachers at the University. Under the Regulations of the University the appointment of professors, readers and lecturers required the sanction of the Government of India. Such powers did not exist in regard to any other University in India and the Secretary of State refused to grant such powers in regard to the Aligarh and Benaras University Schemes<sup>4</sup>. Not unnaturally, Calcutta University under a spirited Vice-Chancellor like Asutosh found these powers very restrictive, although he had had a large hand in drawing up the Regulations as Chairman of the Committee appointed by the Government in 1906. The first open clash came in the middle of 1913 but the storm had been brewing for almost a year. Resolutions recommending the appointments of Abdul Rasul, Khuda Bux, K.P. Jayaswal, Abdul Hafiz, Zahid Suhrawardy, and Abdulla Al Mamun Suhrawardy were passed in the Senate and the Syndicate on various dates

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1. GI - Edn., A1-2, May 1912.

2. The Modern Review, VI-5, (Nov 1909), 510.

3. Ibid., XI-3 (Mar 1912), 325.

4. GI - Edn., Deposit 3. July 1914.

in June and July 1912. On the last day of July Asutosh, in a private letter, informed Harcourt Butler of the appointments, giving only the last names of the appointees. Henry Sharp was not quite clear as to the identities of some of them but he wrote on 5 August to the head of the Central Intelligence Department in Calcutta asking for information on all of them. "Can Rasul by any chance be our friend the Congresswalla?", queried the indomitable Henry Sharp. The formal application was submitted in late August by the University to the Rector who sent it on to the Central Government after nearly three months. (The Government of India deliberately chose to let Bengal take its own time). Meanwhile the appointments had been published in the University Calendar and the teachers had started their work<sup>1</sup>.

The Department of Education of the Government of India took objection to three appointments - those of Abdul Rasul, Abdulla Suhrawardy and Kashiprasad Jayaswal - because of their political activities. Abdul Rasul, a Muslim from Eastern Bengal and an Oxford trained Barrister at the Calcutta High Court was one of the very few prominent Muslims who took a leading part in the anti-partition agitation in Bengal. He had strong nationalist views and was an important member of the Bengal Congress. Abdulla Suhrawardy, a member of the well-known Suhrawardy family of Calcutta, was an Arabic scholar and a Barrister. His first appointment at the University in 1911 was approved by the Government. At about that time he began to take a more prominent part in politics, becoming a founder member of the Bengal Presidency Muhammadan Association which sought to unite the younger and more advanced section of Muslims. His party looked for support from radical Hindu leaders such as Bipin Chandra Pal<sup>2</sup> who was to be found preaching the cause of Hindu-Muslim unity in the migrant working class areas of Central and North Calcutta. Kashi Prasad Jayaswal

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1. GI. Edn., A1-11, June 1913.

2. GI.-Home-Political, A111. May 1913.

an Oxford graduate and a Barrister practising at the Calcutta High Court, had links with Bipin Chandra Pal and V.D. Savarkar, and had recently been staying in Egypt and hobnobbing with the Nationalists there<sup>1</sup>."

The Department could hardly contain its fury "one wonders what sort of history lectures these gentlemen will give ... their lectures will be tinged with anti-British sentiments. Also their unchallenged enjoyment of these posts will lend colour to the idea so prevalent in Bengal that it pays to be seditious.... Altogether, Sir A. Mookerjee seems to have got hold of a very funny crew."<sup>2</sup> Apart from this there were, noted the Department, serious procedural lapses on the part of the University which resented any interference by the Government of India and openly regarded the Government as no more than a formally confirming authority. This attitude, noted Henry Sharp, was constantly seen in the wording of resolutions of the Senate as they appeared in the daily papers which would make it seem that the Senate was the final authority<sup>3</sup>. Another common practice of the University was to tie the hands of the Government by allowing a thing to be done previous to sanction, the undoing of which would cause hardship to students and bring the Government of India, if it did not sanction it, into odium. The Department wanted this to be firmly put down in order to avoid establishing a precedent which would be difficult to upset. The racial composition of the teaching staff showed, the Department's note went on, that the University intended to "distribute the funds for University teaching mainly as sinecures among their friends".<sup>4</sup> Of the 47 lecturers either appointed or suggested only six were Europeans. Even for English, which surely required teaching by English people, there were two Englishmen as against three Bengalis<sup>5</sup>.

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1. GI - Edn., Al-11, June 1913,

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid.

In the Executive Council of the Government of India, Harcourt Butler was alone in urging a conciliatory approach to the issue. One reason for his caution was the lukewarm attitude of the Government of Bengal who were mystified by the strong reaction of the Central Government to these proposed appointments. The issue which raised such a storm in Delhi did not create a stir in the official circle in Calcutta<sup>1</sup>. Secondly, in view of the delay, Butler was personally prepared to sanction all the appointments, subject to reconsideration at the end of two years on condition that the whole post-graduate arrangement at Calcutta University would be regarded as experimental and that the appointees would not indulge in politics during their term in office<sup>2</sup>. These were tough conditions but even then the Governor-General's Executive Council over-ruled the Education Member. R.W. Carlyle, Deputy Secretary to the Government of India, wanted the University "sharply pulled up". The most hawkish comment came from Reginald Craddock, the Home Member, who was horrified and found the Vice-Chancellor's action "most deliberate and wicked". Craddock also took a swipe at the Bengal Government for "the length to which the Government of Bengal have carried the policy of fostering sedition, that a man of the position of a Vice-Chancellor has dared to put forward these names"<sup>3</sup>. Craddock was sure that the teaching of history in the University would be a teaching of sedition<sup>4</sup>. Syed Ali Imam, the Indian Member of the Council, showed, not wholly unnaturally, an ambivalent attitude - on the one hand he was against appointing men with anti-British sentiments as teachers, on the other hand he was not prepared to hand over the decision-making in such

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1. G.B. - Gen - Edn., 1-11, A51-52, Jan 1913.

2. GI - Edn., A1-11, June 1913 and Butler Collection - Butler to Lady Griffin - 10 July 1913, Mss Eur.F.116/24.

3. GI - Edn., A1-11, June 1913.

4. Ibid.

cases to the Intelligence Department although he hastened to add that he had no doubt about the accuracy of the Intelligence report on these people. This was because, as Imam explained, this Department had a tendency to stamp even fair criticism of government measures as disloyalty. But all the same he would still veto the appointments if the Bengal Government supported the action<sup>1</sup>. There was a deadlock in the Council - Butler was against vetoing without Bengal's concurrence. The case was examined for a second time in the Council and the hardliners won the day. In the meantime Bengal had telegraphically asked for a further postponement so that they could make known their position in writing. Hardinge was willing but Craddock and the others were anxious not to let Bengal "procrastinate until the new session which was due to start in another three weeks time. However, the Order to veto was delayed for another fortnight<sup>2</sup>.

A storm of protest greeted news of the impending Order when it reached Calcutta - in the Senate members angrily denounced the Government. Gurudas Banerjee, Bhupendranath Basu and Rashbehari Ghosh<sup>3</sup>, moved resolutions pointing out that the unqualified exclusion from teaching work of men with political involvement-which they claimed to be a new policy since men like Surendranath Banerjee, proprietor of the Ripon College and Herambachandra Maitra, Principal of the City College, both in Calcutta, were allowed to carry on their teaching work - would harm the interest of education by depriving the University of the services of capable men. This resolution, carried by 34 votes to 2, was seconded by the Rev. Milburn of the Scottish Churches College in

1. GI - Edn., A1 - 11, June 1913.

2. Ibid.

3. Gurudas Banerjee was a retired High Court Judge who was also the first Indian Vice-Chancellor of the University from 1890-1892. Bhupendranath Basu was also a lawyer who became a Vice-Chancellor during 1923-1925 and also a member of the Secretary of State's Council during that period. Rashbehari was one of the most well-paid lawyers of Calcutta.



Calcutta. He observed, "It was going too far to restrict the liberty of men to the extent that was proposed in the Government letter. It was an un-English thing to do. They were asked to acquiesce in the view that to take part in politics, even though the politics were of an innocent character, was a semi-criminal offence: that it was something which might not indeed bring down on the offender the terrors of the law but that in a number of roundabout ways the government would get at the offender and make him sorry he ever took part in it. They, the Europeans here, were bound to consider that aspect of the case, to what extent liberty was right, to what extent repression was right<sup>1</sup>." Significantly, two high officials of the Bengal Government, P.C. Lyon, Member of the Bengal Executive Council in charge of education, and W.W. Hornell, the Director of Public Instruction, although present in the Senate during the debate neither participated nor voted. Asutosh as Vice-Chancellor was in the Chair and did not participate but "took the opportunity of an explanation to the Senate to attack the Government of India in an unseemly and ungrateful manner"<sup>2</sup>. Comments in the Indian press were similarly bitter. The Indian Daily News asked whether the Government wanted University lecturers to be "political eunuchs" with no political views of their own<sup>3</sup>. The Amrita Bazar Patrika wondered what the University's duties should be if<sup>it</sup> could not affiliate colleges up to any

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1. Minutes of the Senate, II, 675-693. (Debates of 5 July 1913).

There was not much love lost between the missionaries who worked in the field of Indian education and the Government. In a joint note written a decade earlier by H.H. Risley, the Home Secretary and H.W. Orange, the Director General of Education, Government of India, the authors refused to assign the missionaries a significant role in Indian education. The missionaries, they said, could not be free of their sectarian bias; many of their teachers were not highly educated; they spent their lives in India taking leave only at rare intervals thus losing touch with best educational ideas; they held themselves aloof from European society and "associate largely with natives and are predisposed to adopt their point of view, above all they feel that they are liable to be judged by the results of examinations, their tendency is to compete for students with rival institutions."

GI - Home Edn., A 67-86, Dec. 1903.

2. GI - Edn., A85 -94 Oct. 1913.

3. Indian Daily News, 24 June 1913.

standard, could not recognise schools or examine its students or could not even appoint its own teachers. Was it only to conduct examinations and announce results ? The Patrika cited the examples of leading English politicians like Lords Rosebery, Morley and Curzon who were brilliant University men. Why in the case of India was a different policy being pursued?<sup>1</sup>.

The personal factor in this whole controversy was underlined by Asutosh in a long demi-official letter to Henry Sharp in which he claimed that <sup>he</sup> Government of India had initiated a new policy by insisting on the exclusion of politically active persons from teaching work<sup>2</sup>. It was a policy, he claimed which he had been the first to suggest to the government four years ago but he was then overruled. Now it was too late. All this publicity could have been avoided by simply sending him a demi-official in the six months during which the Government considered the issue. "During the last seven years", Asutosh went on, "I have managed to tide over many a grave difficulty without acrimonious debate in the Senate and an apparent conflict between the <sup>g</sup>overnment and the Senate. I can recollect many an instance when a timely demi-official letter from Sir Herbert Risley, Sir Harold Stuart or Sir Archdale Earle led to a speedy and satisfactory solution of a difficult question."<sup>3</sup> In other words the Government of India no longer took him into their confidence. But "Did he take us into his?", asked Henry Sharp, "Did he ever say or write the things to us which he wrote and he alleges that he said to Sir Herbert Risley and Sir Harold Stuart ? Have we

1. Amrita Bazar Patrika, 26 June 1913.

The college affiliation reference was to the case of the Ananda Mohan College in Mymensingh in which the Government of India refused to grant affiliation even though the Government of Bengal supported the application.

2. GI - Edn., A85-94, Oct. 1913.

3. Ibid.

recently been encouraged by the tone of his convocation speech of 1912 and the letters from the Registrar to repose any confidence in him ?" Harcourt Butler echoed the same feelings - under the previous Government of India, he said, Asutosh "was in a different mood, getting his own way in most things, and hoping for extensions. He realises now that there is no chance of re-election<sup>1</sup>."

The row over these appointments was just the beginning; there came many others, though less publicised. The University proposed G.F. Shirras - an Englishman and an officer of the Indian Educational Service in Bengal - for the Minto Professorship of Economics at the University on a salary of Rs.1250 per month (He was drawing Rs.650 then). The Department, however, was not happy at the selection of a "mischievous person who would be better out of Calcutta. By various methods he has made himself a persona grata with Sir Asutosh Mukherji, ..... it was under his (Asutosh's) influence that he wrote the extremely impertinent opinion ... upon the Dacca University Committee's report, traversing the financial condition of Bengal and the general policy of Government<sup>2</sup>." However, Shirras saved the situation by withdrawing his application in favour of another job. Instead C.J. Hamilton was recruited from England. Government approved his appointment but the Department objected to two other proposals, for Professors of English, because the University had not supplied full particulars as to the sources from which their salaries would be paid and as to the justification for these appointments. Butler overruled the objections, not only because the two professors being Englishmen were a very welcome addition to the teaching staff, but also

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1. GI.-Edn., - A85-94. Oct. 1913.

The Convocation speech had nothing to say about discipline and the eschewing of politics and had contained a passionate defence of the primacy of Calcutta University - but its tone today seems quite unobjectionable. The Registrar's letters had been concerned with an application for funds - and were described as discourteous.

2. GI.-Edn., - A26-33, Mar. 1914.

because both the Governor and the Vice-Chancellor warmly supported these choices so that a refusal would incur quite unnecessary and justifiable odium. He stood firm on grounds of policy: "we should give the Universities as much freedom as possible. If we press them too hard we shall certainly get a request from the Secretary of State to let the University select its Professors, as had been done in the case of the Aligarh and Benares Universities."<sup>1</sup>

In an attempt to get the letter of the law on his side and yet avoid going to the government for sanction Asutosh now began using a legal loophole - in May and August 1913 he appointed six Assistant Lecturers on a salary of Rs.150-200 a month and two Assistant Professors on a salary of Rs.500-700 per month. The University Regulations mentioned only Professors, Readers and Lecturers as appointments requiring government sanction. Henry Sharp could hardly contain his rage - this action of the University, noted the irate Joint Secretary, showed a determination to act independently of the Government, to run counter to the wishes of the Government and to drive through the whole spirit of the Regulations. Worst of all, three of the Assistant Lecturers appointed, Jitendra Lal Banerjee, Rajanikanta Guha and V.S. Ketkar were "seriously tainted"<sup>2</sup>. The Syndicate had completely betrayed the trust in it by appointing objectionable persons - the Government must move on this. But the Law Department of the Government cautioned against any precipitate action. Although the underlying spirit of the Act of 1904 seemed to be designed to allow Government to control the selection of academic staff with a view to keep out undesirables the Law Member Ali Imam found the point full of doubt. His advice was that notwithstanding the fact that the general intention of the regulations was clearly in favour of such government control, this in itself, however good a point, should not be regarded as strong enough

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1. GI. - Edn., - A26-33, Mar. 1914.

2. GI. - Edn., - Deposit 3, July 1914.

to clear the doubt. It would therefore be safer not to proceed on the assumption that the action of the university was without any authority.

"These appointments have certainly been made", wrote W.H. Vincent, the Law Secretary, "after consultation with if not at the instance of the Vice-Chancellor, Mr. Justice Mukherji, a very acute lawyer, and it is certain, in the circumstances, that he would not have allowed them to be made unless he thought that they were justified by regulations, or that a good case in law could be made for the action of the University."<sup>1</sup>

Asutosh defended the appointment of "tainted" persons on the ground that Jitendralal had promised to avoid politics; that Rajanikanta had given an undertaking in 1907 to Blackwood, the Magistrate of Mymensingh, that he would not indulge in politics and on that promise he had been employed at Ananda Mohan College which was a government-aided institution. Of the non-Bengali V.S. Ketkar's antecedents Asutosh pleaded ignorance.<sup>2</sup> In any case, said the Vice-Chancellor, these teachers were all being employed temporarily for one year to help the over-burdened Professors and none of these could in any sense be termed a University lecturer within the meaning of Chapter XI of the Regulations.<sup>3</sup>

Disagreement between the Government and the University over the control of affiliated colleges and staff appointments was not only about political issues of 'loyalty' and 'soundness', there was a more strictly educational aspect too. One major function of the new Regulations had been to arm the University with greater and more precise powers in respect both of existing and of new affiliations, so as to raise and sustain college standards of teaching and equipment. Colleges in applying to the University for affiliation, or a renewal of affiliation, were required to submit detailed reports on the number and qualifications of their teachers, on accommodation, on the holdings of the library,

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1. GI. - Edn. - Deposit 3, July 1914.

2. GI. - Edn. - Deposit 5, July 1914.

3. GI. - Edn. - Deposit 3, July 1914.

the equipment of the laboratory and the general financial position of the college.

Affiliation could be sought in one or more subjects and to either Intermediate or B.A. level. Some colleges offered instruction only up to Intermediate level, admitting students from schools at 15 or 16 years of age, immediately after their matriculation, for a two year course. These were Second Grade Colleges, doing work which in England fell to the sixth form years of schools. There were fourteen such colleges in Bengal. Those colleges which taught to B.A. level, with courses lasting four years from matriculation, or even to M.A., were labelled First Grade Colleges. Among the eighteen such colleges were included the two women's colleges of Bengal. All the government colleges - eight in number - belonged to the First Grade. They were controlled by the Department of Public Instruction and staffed by members of the Indian and Provincial Education Services. Three others were missionary institutions, partly funded by missionary societies in Britain and staffed in part by missionary teachers. The rest were managed and staffed by Indians. There was a great range in size and quality both within and between the two grades of college. Some of them, especially those in Calcutta were very large: the Scottish Churches College and the Metropolitan Institution (later renamed Vidyasagar College) had 1,116 and 1,023 students respectively in 1911 - 1912.<sup>1</sup> But there were some Mufassal colleges with not much more than a hundred students. And the quality and spread of teaching in such institutions were notably inferior to those of Presidency College, say.

What all were intended to share, however, was a pattern of instruction by lecture: each teacher lectured on an average for three hours a day, each student attended some four lectures a day. The

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1. Sixth IQR, 1907 - 1912, II, 88. All these Colleges were commonly known as "arts colleges" - the term used to describe institutions which offered instruction to students for the ordinary degrees in arts or science as distinguished from professional courses in law, medicine or engineering.

University required of each college that a minimum of 140 lectures be given on each subject, spread over the two years at Intermediate level, 160 lectures at B.A. and 180 at M.A. level. Though laboratory work formed part of the tuition in colleges with science classes, and though in the best colleges the quality of such work was of a high order, the lecture was everywhere the dominant form. A few of the colleges in this period began to provide some tutorials for their students - Presidency College under H.R. James, its energetic principal was the pioneer but the size of classes made this impossible for the large majority of colleges. Calcutta University permitted classes of 150 students and in special cases - particularly in Calcutta - extended the limit to 200 per class in some of the private colleges<sup>1</sup>. Clearly the qualification and number of teachers was vital to the effectiveness of colleges and a major point for review when applications for affiliation were made.

This was ground, therefore, for conflict between the Government of India, the University and the colleges, especially round the two issues of what Government thought unacceptable recommendations for affiliation and retrospective affiliation which forced the Government's hand. In June 1910, the City College in Calcutta applied for affiliation in Physics to B.Sc. standard and in anticipation of confirmation admitted students in B.Sc. Physics for the 1910 - 1911 academic session. There was a delay thereafter of nearly a year before Calcutta University recommended affiliation to the Government. Henry Sharp was against granting retrospective affiliation but Harcourt Butler did not want to cause hardship to the students. Hence affiliation was granted with a clear warning that any further case of delayed application from the University would not be entertained.<sup>2</sup>

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1. All colleges were expected to be self-contained institutions for all the subjects taught. Outside Calcutta colleges were too scattered for any co-operation in teaching between them to have been possible. But co-operation was unknown even within Calcutta where the largest concentration of colleges occurred.

2. GI.-Edn., A93-94, July 1911.

This was one of the first cases - many more followed, with the result that the Central Government began to draw the Bengal Government more and more into the controversy. The Central Government's relation with the colleges began and ended with its power to confirm or refuse an affiliation but in every other respect the Bengal Government and the University were responsible for their general welfare. When the Jagannath College at Dacca applied for affiliation in History at the B.A. pass standard for the 1911 - 1912 session the Government of India refused, on the ground of inadequate staff. The issue dragged on for a year until at the insistence of the University, reinforced by the Bengal Government, the Central Government relented<sup>1</sup>. The Edward College in the district of Pabna in Eastern Bengal was due to have its affiliation to Intermediate Arts standard withdrawn in June 1911 because the College was in an unsatisfactory condition. On appeal from the College the Syndicate, with the approval of the Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, recommended that a period of two more years, up to May 1913, be allowed to the College to remedy defects. The main necessary improvement was the appointment of a whole-time professor or lecturer for each subject, which was the usual requirement for affiliation to the Intermediate Arts standard. The finances of the college did improve thanks to donations from zamindars and other local people following a visit to the district by the Governor Lord Carmichael. However all the improvements promised were not carried out. Nevertheless the Syndicate in May 1913 again requested continuation of affiliation, for one more year. They based their argument on the fact that the whole of north Bengal in which this College was situated had only one first grade college, at Rajshahi, which, because of overcrowding with 780 students on its rolls, had had to refuse admission to many others. The college at Pabna, private and unaided, was the only

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1. GI. - Edn., A65 - 70, Jan. 1913.



other college in this region trying to serve the higher educational needs of millions of people. Clearly there was a case for the retention of this college<sup>1</sup>.

But the Education Department was not convinced - Pabna, "an extraordinarily third-class place", was difficult of access and mainly inhabited by pleaders. The college, with an "agitator" as its principal, was run by a committee of pleaders to whom had been added as a cosmetic exercise, in addition to the District Magistrate, the District Judge and the Civil Surgeon. One of the members of the Committee was also an agitator. As if all this were not too much for the Department, the professors were very poorly qualified, in fact, said the Department, quite unfit to be professors. Two were second class M.A.s three were third class M.A.s and one was only a B.Sc. The principal had a salary of only Rs.140 a month. The fees charged by the College were Rs.4 a month, one rupee more than fees in the top class of a decent high school. There were no hostel facilities for its 110 students, only 74 of whom lived with their guardians. And the Department had doubts about their ability to discipline the students.<sup>2</sup>

Harcourt Butler reminded the Department: "our policy in Bengal should be not to concentrate in big centres but to develop local institutions. .... We are faced with an enormously growing demand for education. Our policy must be to try to improve existing institutions rather than to criticise and condemn - a constructive rather than a destructive attitude that has been too long prevalent. Except on political grounds I cannot agree to close any institution unless we provide something better to take its place."<sup>3</sup> The Government

1. GI. - Edn., A42 - 45, Aug. 1913.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

of Bengal, on being approached for its opinion, emphasised the educational needs of the area and "the fair liberality" of the people of Pabna in aid of the College and reinforced the case by offering to help the college with a grant-in-aid. Provisional affiliation was granted for a year.

The proposal to raise the Ananda Mohan college in Mymensingh from a second grade to a first grade college generated much more heat and controversy. This college, situated in the largest district in Bengal with four million people, had the enthusiastic support of the local people and the district administration, backed up by the University and the Bengal Government. The refusal of the Government of India to grant affiliation was taken by the press and the public as an unjustified interference by that Government in the legitimate concern of the University. Surendranath Banerjee moved a resolution in the Imperial Legislative Council demanding publication of all the correspondence between the Government and the University and other interested bodies in connection with this issue. This was refused, but with the Bengal Government promising a substantial grant-in-aid in exchange for reasonable Government control, affiliation was granted.

In less than three years the relationship between the University and the Government of India had moved from one of trust and cordiality to one of mutual suspicion and undisguised hostility. The University, helped by its often publicised tussles with the Government of India, was building up its image as a protector and promoter of Indian interests in the field of higher education and learning. From the Indian point of view freedom of private enterprise in education was essential as it was through a network of relatively cheap private institutions that educational opportunities could be made available for the Bengali middle classes. And it was here that the University could act as a check on the



*Asutosh Mukherjee*  
31 March, 1906 - 30 March, 1911  
4 April, 1911 - 3 April, 1913

restrictive policies of the Government. "It is well known to everybody" said the Hitavadi, the vernacular paper with the largest circulation in Bengal, "that but for Asutosh, Curzon's University Regulations would have shut the door of higher education to middle class people."<sup>1</sup>

The possibilities of conflict with Government over the exercise of University control over the colleges of Bengal during the Swadeshi disturbances had always been present, perhaps inevitable. But the major conflict with the University in Sir Asutosh Mookerjee's day came over an issue on which agreement in principle might have been expected - that of extending the role of the University from examining and supervision to teaching and research. Section 24 of the Raleigh Commission Report had commented "We think it expedient that undergraduate students should be left, in the main, to the colleges, but we suggest that the Universities may justify their existence as teaching bodies by making further and better provision for advance course of study."<sup>2</sup> And the Act of 1904 provided that "The University shall be and shall be deemed to have been incorporated for the purpose (among others) of making provision for the instruction of students, with power to appoint University Professors and lecturers to hold and manage educational endowments, to erect, equip and maintain University libraries, laboratories and museums, to make regulations relating to the residence and conduct of students and to do all acts ... which tend to promotion of study and research."<sup>3</sup> Change was thus latent in or rendered possible by the Act though it took no steps to define its place in the scheme of education as a whole or to provide a new constitution by which it might be properly administered.

Post-graduate education had been early provided in Bengal : between 1858 and 1864 nine M.A's had been awarded by Calcutta University<sup>4</sup>

1. The Hitavadi - 13 Mar 1914.

2. Report of the Raleigh Commission, Para 24 - Quoted in Hundred Years, 179.

3. Sadler Report, II, 41.

4. Sadler Report, II, 38. The M.A. was by written paper, not by dissertation.

and by the turn of the century something like eighty a year<sup>1</sup>. The teaching of students for the M.A. and later for the M.Sc. degree was done entirely, however, in the colleges. Yet until 1903 not a single college was affiliated to M.A. level, so that the instruction which candidates received was quite unsystematic and depended upon the presence in college of some professor able and willing to give tuition on what was largely an individual basis. The only regular M.A. class anywhere seems to have been that in English held by Presidency College for some years.

The Act of 1904 spoke of "making provision for the instruction of students" but the Regulations framed in 1906 did not spell out precisely how this might be done, though their general intention seemed to have been that the University should make good the deficiencies of the colleges. This was certainly the interpretation put upon them by the Government of India Resolution No 600 of 14 August 1906 which sanctioned the Regulations : "Chapter XI contemplates the appointment of University lecturers who will be for the most part professors in affiliated colleges or experts otherwise employed. The object of the lecturers will be to carry on post-graduate teaching. There are many colleges in Bengal which, although unable to undertake a complete course of lectures in an advanced subject, might be able to spare one or two members of the staff to lecture on a portion of such a course, so that the ground would be completely covered by two or more professors belonging to different colleges<sup>2</sup>." Thus what was contemplated was a network of complementary colleges with the University at the apex stepping in to supply the gaps in the system whenever and wherever necessary.

Two features of the Regulations made formal teaching much more

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1. In 1901-02 seventy-nine and in 1906-07, eighty-eight M.A.s were awarded. The figures include a few Bihar and Orissa candidates. Fifth IQR 1902-07, II, 72. (Table 32).

2. GI. - Home - Edn., A98-99, Sept. 1906. Such mutual assistance between colleges might have been possible in Calcutta but certainly not in the case of Muffasal colleges.

necessary than before - the raising of the range and standard of the M.A. examination and the requirement that a non-collegiate student might not present himself until three years after his graduation, whereas a college student might appear after two. On the other hand, as the Raleigh Commission Report noted, all the colleges at this point found that the effort required to enable them to meet affiliation or re-affiliation standards taxed their resources to the full. No college sought affiliation until 1907 and in 1908 only Duff and Presidency were affiliated, and in six subjects only altogether. The Act had made it possible for the University to undertake post-graduate teaching, the inadequacies of the colleges made it necessary for it to do so, and Sir Asutosh seized upon the opportunity to make Calcutta "a centre for the cultivation and advancement of knowledge"<sup>1</sup>. In the discussion preceding the Act of 1904 Gokhale had seen provision for the post-graduate teaching role of the Universities as "just that part of the Bill which will not come into operation for a long time to come"<sup>2</sup> - mainly because of its cost. Asutosh, however, set about creating the teaching structure so as to dragoon the government into supporting it.

In its first days post-graduate teaching at Calcutta followed the lines envisaged in the Government resolution of 1906, the University acting as a co-ordinator of collegiate effort. The system was rendered possible by the co-operation of professors of the different colleges who lectured, without pay, outside their college hours, usually in the college buildings.<sup>3</sup> The Presidency, Scottish Churches, the Sanskrit and the Bangabasi College and the Indian Museum - all Calcutta institutions - largely helped in this work by providing their senior teachers for the University post-graduate work. Dacca College had an

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1. Addresses - Literary and Academic, 19.

2. Hundred Years, I, 175.

3. The only University building in Calcutta in 1907 was the Senate Hall; an examination hall and a library were then in course of construction. No Indian university then had either lecture hall or laboratory. Fifth IQR, 1902-07, I, 33.

M.A. affiliation in English only but three of its teachers provided post-graduate teaching as University lecturers in history, economics, physics and chemistry, students in these subjects appearing as direct students of the University and not as those of Dacca College.

In 1909 to the college lecturers was added the holder of a whole time university chair, established with funds provided by the Government of India: the Minto Professor of Economics, M nohar Lal. This first appointment was followed in 1912 by the creation of the posts of Hardinge Professor of Mathematics, George V Professor of Mental and Moral Philosophy and a Professor of Ancient Indian History. From 1913 a third stage began in which the University, from its own accumulated funds, appointed University readers and lecturers. Finally, from 1917 post-graduate instruction in Bengal was centralised in the hands of Calcutta University with the establishment of full-fledged post-graduate departments of Arts and Sciences, funded by the University. In these same years, from 1908-09 to 1916-17, the number of M.A. students in the university classes had grown from 19 to 1,172.<sup>1</sup> In all this development Asutosh played a crucial role - indeed it would not be an exaggeration to call him the founding father of the teaching University of Calcutta.

In its earliest phase Asutosh had disarmed any possible Government opposition to the growth of post-graduate teaching by fitting it into the collegiate system and making it cost-free. He was able to appeal to European example, both that of London and of the German universities, in stressing the need for the University to be a centre of teaching and research.<sup>2</sup> He succeeded in attracting munificent gifts from the

1. Sadler Report - II, 44.

2. Addresses, Literary and Academic, 42-43 : "It is rather late, in the beginning of the twentieth century, to doubt or dispute the value and importance of research as a part of academic training.... Call it by what name you will, describe it, if you please, as investigation, or as advancement of knowledge in the language of Bacon, or as creative action in the phrase of Emerson, or as constructive scholarship in the words of Munsterberg, there can be no possible controversy as to the importance of the conception." Asutosh Mookerjee, Convocation 1908.

great landowning families – and used them, in part, to create the physical structure of a teaching university.<sup>1</sup> And he was able to secure wide popular support by answering the Bengali demand for readier access to education and by appealing to Bengali pride in their own intellectual resources. As a Modern Review editorial put it, "The University has... conferred a great boon on the student community by appointing professors, assistant professors and lecturers in many subjects.... It does not matter if their classes are not held in large classrooms in a specially built palatial structure and all the lectures are not delivered by European professors enjoying fat salaries."<sup>2</sup>

Initially Government responded favourably to the growth of University post-graduate work, making some non-recurring grants for buildings and for libraries to all the universities, and at Calcutta endowing two university chairs and providing funds "as an experimental measure" for the appointment of university lecturers.<sup>3</sup> It also gave approval to the creation in 1909 of a central University Law College in partial supercession of the law classes attached to individual colleges. There had been opposition from some non-government colleges and from elements within the legal profession, but though the new college, in contrast to the situation in Bombay, Madras and Allahabad, came under University not Government control<sup>4</sup>, there was no opposition from Government: Bengal and India gave recurring grants and India three lakhs towards a hostel for the law students<sup>5</sup>.

1. 2½ lakhs from the Maharaja of Darbhanga, for example, which went into a University library. Addresses, Literary and Academic, 31-33

2. The Modern Review, April 1914, 383.

3. Sixth IQR, 1907-1912, I, 55.

4. Ibid.

5. The appointment of teachers to the Law College fell outside the purview of the 1904 Act, and was in the hands of the Governing body of sixteen members under the Chairmanship of the Vice-Chancellor ex-officio. Hundred Years, 225.



From 1911, however, the University and the Government of India, under whose direct control Calcutta remained until 1921, began to part company. Several factors contributed to this. The beginning of 1911 witnessed the departure from India of Minto and Risley with whom Asutosh had developed a close personal rapport. Before the new Viceroy Lord Hardinge could establish a meaningful working relationship with Asutosh, the seat of the government was transferred from Calcutta to Delhi. At one stroke a physical distance of several hundred miles not only severed the existing close link between the University and the Central Government but introduced consequent delays in correspondence which became a fruitful source of recrimination in the coming years. At about the same time the new Department of Education of the Government of India started functioning. Harcourt Butler, the first Education Member, although a disciplinarian and in favour of more state control over education, did not want to curtail educational facilities. In a note headed 'The Political Outlook in India', prepared while he was at the Foreign Department of the Government of India, Butler had argued that "a definite educational policy is required. The country is waking up industrially and clamouring for better education and more of it, and especially industrial and technical education."<sup>1</sup>

Butler's immediate subordinate in the Education Department, Henry Sharp, was much less open-minded. Before he joined the Department as the new Joint Secretary he had been the Director of Public Instruction in the province of Eastern Bengal and Assam, where his policy of snuffing out political agitators in schools and colleges

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1. Butler Collection, MSS. Eur. F.116/22.

had landed him on a collision course with the University of Calcutta. He felt strongly that the University, like the Bengali Hindus, was hostile to the Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, and he came to dislike them both.<sup>1</sup> His unhappy experiences in Eastern Bengal made him very suspicious of all private educational institutions and he was all for stricter government control of them. Because of the distance involved after the removal of the capital to Delhi, Sharp's first-hand experience gave his views a certain influence on the shaping of government policy towards the University since he was the only person in the higher counsels of the Government with a personal knowledge of Bengal education. In fairness to Butler it must be said that there were occasions when he tried to restrain the exuberance of the reforming zeal of his youthful Joint Secretary.

Harcourt Butler, in fact, was more critical of Calcutta's methods than of its underlying principles. He readily recognised that the Government of India had pronounced in favour of a teaching role in 1904 - and would do so again by favouring the foundation of teaching universities at Dacca and Patna with sole responsibility for imparting and controlling all M.A. studies. But he was concerned at the growth of a "proletariat of semi-educated youths who are without employment" and he felt that control of the colleges was inadequate. His remedy, however, was not an extension of Calcutta's authority but the creation of many more new universities.<sup>2</sup>

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1. The dislike was mutual. The Bengalis it was argued, wanted less government control of education because "Bengal enjoys a higher type of local self-government (whatever may be its real worth) than some other provinces. Unfortunately, the men, e.g., Sir R. Craddock, Sir H.S. Butler, Mr. Sharp, who will now rule the educational destinies of Bengal, all hail from provinces where education is in a backward condition. Neither the Central Provinces, nor the defunct satrapy of Eastern Bengal and Assam, nor the U.P. can be held up as educational models for Bengal to copy. But everyone has a good conceit of himself, which we do not want to disturb. But on the same principle, why not leave us too, alone?" The Modern Review, July 1913, 100-102.

2. Butler Collection, MSS. Eur.F.116/22.

Such creation would necessarily be at the expense of Calcutta University, given the great extent of its original jurisdiction. So it proved. In the last week of December 1911 the Government of India announced plans to establish a teaching and residential university at Dacca. To Bengali Hindus - and more particularly to those of Calcutta - already smarting from the shift of the capital to Delhi, the proposal was anathema and was harshly denounced as a measure designed to perpetuate an educational partition of Bengal even after the political partition had been undone.<sup>1</sup> For Calcutta University, also unsparing in its criticism, Dacca appeared as a potential rival, to which funds might be diverted which otherwise would have come to Calcutta. There was also resentment at the report by the Nathan Committee, set up by the Bengal Government to submit a scheme for Dacca University, which seemed to suggest that money would be better spent on Dacca than on Calcutta, because it would be a teaching and residential university rather than a merely federal, affiliating university on the Calcutta model. In this there was an implied condemnation of the work of the existing university.

In December 1912 the Calcutta University Syndicate submitted a note on the Nathan Committee Report in which it claimed that if the Calcutta University had been mainly an examining University in the past, for the last few years it had been endeavouring, slowly perhaps, but steadily to expand its teaching functions and to undertake direct teaching work on its own account.<sup>2</sup> The Syndicate went on to claim that Calcutta University was and must continue to be the premier University not only in the province, but in the whole country. Nothing less than that was the destiny marked out for it by the position and importance of Calcutta as the premier city in India. If Bengal was pre-eminently an intellectual province, Calcutta was the intellectual centre of Bengal and a University

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1. GB - Gen-Edn., 4A-38, A39-43, Sept.1912.

2. GB - Gen-Edn., IU-6, A1-4, June 1913.

situated at Calcutta enjoyed advantages from this fact which it must always be difficult for any other University to possess.

Calcutta University, moreover, would exist for the whole province even when Dacca University came into being. It was inconceivable to the Syndicate that the claims of the whole body of people or the vast majority should be sacrificed to those of a minority.<sup>1</sup>

As Vice-Chancellor Asutosh also put up in his Convocation address a spirited defence of Calcutta, necessarily affiliating because of the geographical spread of its hinterland, but through its direction and supervision of the colleges necessarily a teaching and a residential university "by delegation".<sup>2</sup> It could already boast, he said, that under its care "there has grown up a numerous and important class of men imbued with the modern spirit, animated by progressive ideas and possessing... some share of that knowledge and learning without which no man ... is able to take an effective part in the higher practical work of life."<sup>3</sup> And he proceeded to outline an ambitious scheme for post-graduate teaching by the University and to proclaim the urgent need for it to become likewise a centre of research, given that hitherto "Indian Universities have ... contributed singularly little towards the advance and increase of knowledge."<sup>4</sup>

1. GB - Gen-Edn., IU-6, A1-4, June 1913.

2. Addresses - Literary and Academic, 143.

3. Ibid., 145.

4. Addresses - Literary and Academic, 148.

Previous Convocation addresses by Asutosh had been much approved, but that of 1912 with its dismissal of the claims of Dacca, its attack upon enthusiasts who would put their money into general primary education, the deploing of the move to Delhi and the claim for Bengal of primacy in the social and intellectual revolution was found disagreeably challenging by Government.

Asutosh thus staked Calcutta's claims to be or become a full-fledged teaching and research organisation - and he set about realising it by centralising all post-graduate instruction under its direct control before Dacca University could become an established fact.<sup>1</sup> The two crucial factors were clearly time and money, which implied that the University must move ahead as far as possible without waiting for Government action or support. In the three years 1912-13 to 1915 - 16 the number of post-graduate students was trebled, from 375 to 1,172,<sup>2</sup> while by 1917 - 18 there were no less than 202 members of the University post-graduate teaching staff, 60 in Law, 103 in Arts and 39 in Science.<sup>3</sup> For funds sufficient to attract teachers of the necessary high calibre, Indian and European, Asutosh looked to Government and to private benefactors. Lord Hardinge in his Convocation address of 16 March, 1912 as Chancellor announced a recurring grant of Rs.65,000 for the appointment of University Professors and Lecturers, and encouragement of research.<sup>4</sup> Then, later

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1. GB. - Gen - Edn., 1U-6 A1-4, June 1913.

In his confidential statement before the Sadler Commission on 15 November, 1917 Asutosh spoke on the respective position of Calcutta University and the proposed University at Dacca (finally established in 1921) in the educational structure of Bengal. This document throws interesting light on the fears and jealousies of the Bengali Hindus in general and the University establishment in particular regarding Dacca University. "I do not suggest," said Asutosh, "that Dacca should not have a University, that is not my point. What I wish to emphasise is that Dacca will have to work on a modest scale and at a disadvantage, unless by making Dacca a State-run University, you put it artificially on a higher basis than Calcutta. It may be possible for the Government of India by making a grant of Rs.10 lakhs a year, getting eminent men from all parts of the British Empire and putting them into Dacca to place Calcutta in the background." Then Asutosh asked one "vital question". If vast sums were spent on Dacca University would Calcutta be starved? Would funds be forthcoming for Calcutta University? If not, which should have preference? "I should personally be very sorry if the foundation of the Dacca University were to be made an occasion for neglect of Calcutta. Whatever we may do for Dacca and the rest of Bengal... Calcutta occupies the first place in Bengal, will continue to do so, and it would be a fatal mistake to retard the growth of the highest type of University here." Asutosh Collection, National Library, Calcutta.

2. GI - Edn., A54-76. Dec. 1915.

3. Sadler Report, XIII, 112-13.

4. Hundred Years, 187. Hardinge said "I cannot regard the present facilities for higher studies as at all sufficient, when not a few students who wish to take the Degree of Master of Arts have to be turned away for want of accommodation ... It is very important that we should turn out good M.A.s in sufficient numbers; otherwise it will be difficult to find capable lecturers for our colleges, or to provide adequately for research."

that same year the lawyer Taraknath Palit made two gifts of land and money to the value of fifteen lakhs for the creation of a University College of Science and Technology. His example was followed, in 1913, by Rashbehary Ghose who gave ten lakhs to endow four Chairs and eight studentships at the new college and to maintain its laboratory. This munificence was a personal triumph for Asutosh who had used all his persuasive power to loosen the purse-strings of people who had hitherto been very closely involved in the National Education movement. The timing of the gift was very significant in view of the recent announcement of the Dacca University scheme. If Calcutta University could be shown to have secured substantial contributions from rich Bengalis its claim to a greater share of public funds would be strengthened to that extent. Indeed Asutosh while informing Hardinge of the gifts observed "my efforts deserve to be supplemented by liberal aid from the State".<sup>1</sup> As Butler was quick to point out, "There is considerable local jealousy of Dacca. To this is due Rashbehari's gift."<sup>2</sup> Finally, two Chairs, in Comparative Philology and in English were established from the University's own resources. The University had been able to avoid having to rely on Government for funds, while the Governing Body set up to manage the Science College, with the Vice-Chancellor as president ex-officio, was so constituted that the teachers and other University representatives quite swamped the Director of Public Instruction, the one government official on it. For the time being at least, Asutosh was free to organise the College without any reference to the Government of India - very much of a grievance to Henry Sharp. This was the more galling as on the insistence of both donors appointments to the Chairs at the College were always to be filled by Indians, that is by persons born of Indian parents as opposed both to Europeans and those who were called "Statutory Natives of India". Though Harcourt Butler, reasonably enough, thought that it was natural for a man to try to benefit his own people<sup>3</sup> others in the Department of Education

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1. GI. - Edn., A33-47, Oct. 1915.

2. Butler Collection, Butler to Hardinge - 25 Aug 1913, Eur.F.116/40.

3. Ibid.

were infuriated by the 'Indians only' condition: "clear indications of racial prejudice", Sharp complained to Hardinge's Private Secretary<sup>1</sup>. But the difficulty of the position was, as Sharp himself admitted, that the College was the creation of donations, "rare enough in Bengal and not to be discouraged."<sup>2</sup>

The speed with which Asutosh had moved and the rapidity of the post-graduate expansion had, however, outstripped the physical and organisational capacity of the University. Few regular buildings as yet existed and many of the M.A. lectures had to be given in the Darbhanga Building. Equipment and accommodation for efficient teaching were almost non-existent, there was no satisfactory tutorial system: as Sharp commented, the M.A. teaching arrangements were "decidedly Kutcha"<sup>3</sup>. There was doubt whether it would be possible to recruit "first class Indians" to professorships on salaries as low as the Rs.500 proposed<sup>4</sup>, and by 1914 concern was being voiced about the low standard of the Calcutta M.A.<sup>5</sup>

With growing doubt about the quality of the post-graduate work undertaken by the University and the calibre of the students went growing doubt about the suitability of the structure that was being created.

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1. GI.-Edn., A33-47, Oct.1915. Sharp to Du-Boulay, 15 Aug 1913.

2. GI.-Edn., A54-76, Dec.1915.

3. GI.-Edn., A 1-11, June 1913.

4. Butler's Demi-official letter to Rashbehary Ghosh 16 Aug 1913 GI.-Edn., A33-47, Oct.1915. A doubt which Asutosh had raised and attempted to dispel in his Convocation address of 1912, arguing that the lure of freedom to read and research would be sufficient incentive. In fact the Science College attracted a band of very bright men as teachers and scholars, including the future Nobel prizewinner C.V.Raman and Meghnad Saha. See P.C. Ray - Life and Experiences of a Bengali Chemist, I, xv.

5. GI.-Edn., B.1, June 1914; GI.-Edn., A55-87, June 1915.

The Government of India came increasingly to dispute Asutosh's claim that he was fulfilling the intentions of the Act of 1904 and Resolution of 1906. They had intended that the University should supplement college teaching resources. The University on the other hand was busily, and rapidly, drawing to itself all post-graduate teaching. And while Asutosh pointed with pride to a growth in numbers, the official view came to be that the University had created an entirely fictitious demand for M.A. and M.Sc instruction by consistently lowering the standards and ideals of University education and by making that education cheap. Government attributed falling standards to inadequate college and teacher representation in the Senate and Syndicate, though this seems belied by the figures,<sup>1</sup> while Hamilton, the Minto Professor of Economics, argued indeed that it was the large teacher and college element in these bodies which advocated leniency in examinations.<sup>2</sup> But that post-graduate education in the University was deliberately cheap seems incontestable. Fees at the Presidency College were Rs.12 per month - but were Rs.6 at the University. The cost of educating a student in the University post-graduate classes was Rs.168 per annum while at Dacca College the cost was Rs.251-9 annas per annum.<sup>3</sup> University classes, the Government maintained, were altogether too cheap and hence ineffective. (The teaching in the colleges was undoubtedly expensive, especially at the Presidency College. But then adequate teaching for the M.A. and M.Sc. must be expensive.)<sup>4</sup> Worse still, it was darkly hinted that the University, the ultimate authority for awarding degrees, tended to favour its own students at the examinations. W.A.J. Archbold (of the Muslim League's Simla Deputation fame) who was then Principal of Dacca College, wrote

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1. G.I.-Edn., A54-76, Dec.1915. Colleges may have been under-represented but teachers certainly were not : they formed 65% of the Senate, 77% of of the Syndicate and of the Faculties 65% of Arts, 79% of Science, 39% of Law, 73% of Medicine and 36% of Engineering.

2. G.I.-Edn., Deposit 23, March 1915.

3. G.I.-Edn., A30-32, Aug,1917. The average cost per student for all colleges in Bengal, including those teaching only to B.A. level, at Rs.175 was more than the post-graduate figure for Calcutta.

4. G.I.-Edn., A41-45, Jan,1917.



in his letter to the Vice-Chancellor of Calcutta University on 21 September 1914, "our clever boys leave us, some as I.A., most as B.A., not, they tell us, because they get better taught at Calcutta but because they do better in examinations if they are there "<sup>1</sup> Thus with its system of "easy attendance, easy fees and easy tests" the University was drawing away pupils from the colleges.

The Government was not worried only by falling academic standards. Discipline was lax at the University, Government complained, and this encouraged a student to pass out of the discipline of a college and to join disorganised classes under the loose control of the University. Henry Sharp was horrified at such a large gathering of M.A. students in Calcutta which, as the second largest city in the British Empire, had its cultural claims but in many ways was most unsuitable for the coming together of so many students since political influence would always be brought to bear on them there at a vulnerable age.<sup>2</sup> Moreover the aim of producing at post-graduate level a more genuine interest in scholarship and research was not being fulfilled either. The B.A. or B.Sc. took up post-graduate study in the same frame of mind as he had his undergraduate courses - the inducement being that "unless he secures the highest degree he is debarred from any but quite an inferior appointment under Government "<sup>3</sup> With much the same attitude many law students also took an M.A. or M.Sc., pursuing two courses "on the principle that it is as well to have two strings to one's bow "<sup>4</sup> This was encouraged by the University: Hornell had been told that at least 800 students were needed to make the University

1. G.I.-Edn., A54-76, Dec.1915.

2. G.I.-Edn., Deposit 15, April 1914.

3. Hornell, Memorandum on Calcutta University, 20 Sept, 1914, G.I.-Edn., A55-87, June 1915.

4. Ibid. Nearly a fifth of the students in the University classes were from the Law College. Rashbehary Ghosh in making his gift of studentships to guard against this had specifically laid down that the holder "shall devote himself exclusively to research ... and shall not, so long as he holds the studentship, engage in the study of law...." Quoted in Hundred Years, 236. The great attraction of the law classes was that they were held in the evening and were cheap.

classes self-supporting - but "what possible justification can there be for the perpetual existence in Calcutta of 800 post-graduate students, general conditions in Bengal being what they are ?"<sup>1</sup> The fatal tendency in education in India, Sharp commented, was "jerry-building - the fabric has to carry twice as many storeys as the foundations will stand and provide for twice the number of Departments that the outlay will permit of; a penny is always made to do the work of two pence...."<sup>2</sup>

But the most bitter criticism was of the way in which the University was competing with its own affiliated colleges, with the deliberate intention of depriving the colleges of their chance of doing higher work.<sup>3</sup> While refusing to grant affiliation at M.A. level to colleges on the ground of the lack of qualified teachers it did not hesitate to utilise the services of their teachers for its own post-graduate teaching. A good case in point was the government Sanskrit College in Calcutta - the University refused it affiliation in M.A. in Sanskrit but then started its own M.A. classes in Sanskrit using nine teachers of the College. "It's a dog-in-the-manger policy", wrote Henry Sharp<sup>4</sup>. The University argued that the colleges could not accommodate all the M.A. students - but, as Hornell pointed out, while Presidency College had places for 45 students in History in 1913 only 15 joined. The Government of India in a letter to the University made it clear that it saw the University's policy as likely to "supplant rather than supplement higher work in colleges," and that it was unwilling "to see better equipped colleges thus crippled in the scope of their work".

However, the colleges "doing higher work" in Bengal were few in number - Presidency College undertook M.A. teaching in English, History, Political Philosophy, Physics, and Chemistry with a total number of

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1. Hornell Memorandum, GI.-Edn., A55-87, June 1915.

2. GI.-Edn., Deposit 15, April 1914.

3. GI.-Edn., A41-45, Jan. 1917.

4. GI.-Edn., B1, June 1914.

students hovering around 250 a year. Besides Presidency College, the only other Colleges involved were Scottish Churches in Calcutta and the government college at Dacca, both having affiliation in English only. Therefore, it was the interest of the Presidency College which the developments at the University were hurting most. Presidency, designed to be the model institution for higher education in Bengal, 'the Premier College' as the officials called it, had developed as the most prestigious, academically successful and expensive college in Bengal, frequented by the elite of the province. The college had always sought to create a strong corporate life, for staff and students, and under the principalship of H.R. James (1906-1916) the collegiate structure with its common social life was further strengthened. Presidency definitely looked forward to the status of a University College<sup>1</sup> and with a governing body administering a block grant from Government had assumed a semi-autonomy.

Behind the opposition of the Presidency College to the University's encroachment were the officers of the Indian Education Service, an all-India service whose members were recruited in England by the Secretary of State for India. It was almost exclusively European in composition - in 1913 there were only three Indians out of 53 IES men in Bengal.<sup>2</sup> They enjoyed the highest status by virtue of superior pay and other privileges such as leave, pension and other allowances, and occupied all the important posts in the service : Director of Public Instruction, Assistant Director, Principal, Vice-Principal, and Head of Departments in government colleges and Divisional Inspector of Schools. Their pay ranged from Rs.500 rising by an increment of Rs.50 per annum to Rs.1,000 - after that increase of pay depended on promotion and took the form of allowances from Rs.50 to Rs.500.<sup>3</sup> Their rivals in post-graduate teaching, the professors and

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1. GI.-Edn., A55-87, June 1915. The DPI noted that Presidency had become "as it were, a small university". GB-Gen-Edn., A1-3, Mar 1915.

2. GB-Gen-Edn.  $\frac{3-C}{1}$  A113-155, June 1915.

3. GB-Gen-Edn. Ibid.

lecturers in the University Arts and Science classes, by contrast in 1917-18 were paid as little as Rs.50 and in no case more than Rs.575. This was even much less than the salaries paid to Provincial Education Service officers, who provided the bulk of the degree college staffs.<sup>1</sup>

The Indian Education Service officers were concerned that the University's policy would downgrade the government colleges thereby lowering their own status too. They claimed that they were men specially selected by the Secretary of State for India, as being qualified by academic distinction or professional experience, or both, to carry on that work in Bengal.<sup>2</sup> In a memorandum signed by eight Indian Education Service officers of the Presidency College (including two Indian) the officers protested, "The trend of developments over which we have been able to exercise no control, has reduced us to an insignificant, as well as intolerable position, in regard to M.A. and in a lesser degree M.Sc. studies, in the University of Calcutta and threatens to reduce us still further."<sup>3</sup> The memorialists complained that in M.A. teaching they were becoming more and more dominated in their work and steadily elbowed out from it by men, both English and Indian, to few of whom they were willing to concede inferiority. They deprecated the low salaries given to its teachers by the University, but more important the officers argued that when first appointed to the Service the opportunity of higher work had constituted its main attraction, one which was rapidly being eroded by the University's post-graduate system. Excluded from teaching anything beyond the B.A. and B.Sc. degree, the government colleges in general and Presidency in particular would sink to the status of a "secondary school with a B.A. class attached".<sup>4</sup> This would destroy the

1. Sadler Report, XIII, 77-89

2. GI-Edn., Deposit 3, May 1914.

3. Ibid.

4. GI-Edn., A55-87, June 1915. Presidency had the largest concentration of IES men, posts in the College being much coveted by members of the Service.

College and at the same time would increase the recruitment difficulties of the Service.

The IES officers were already extremely unhappy at what they felt was their inadequate representation in the University Senate - in the six years 1908 - 1914 no IES Professor of the Presidency College had been appointed to the Senate.<sup>1</sup> And when they stood for election by the Registered Graduates to the Senate they found themselves rejected because election was "frequently guided by racial considerations as well as by antagonism to the Indian Education Service as such."<sup>2</sup> They thus found themselves powerless to defend themselves or the 'eclectic' system of post-graduate teaching by both colleges and University, powerless even to elicit a clear picture of what the Vice-Chancellor was doing in that field. When James, in the Senate, had complained of action being taken "without detailed information and without a comprehensive scheme of Post Graduate teaching", he and his fellow IES men had been voted down.<sup>3</sup>

The powerlessness of the IES members<sup>4</sup> of the Senate and Syndicate was a reflection of the skill with which Asutosh handled procedures and the strength of the body of support which he had assembled. To the nucleus of patrons who had helped his initial accumulation of offices and examinerships he added further supporters by using his position as Vice-Chancellor. The methods he used were not always very scrupulous, but he established so firm a base, that, as will be seen, even when deprived of his Vice-Chancellorship his grip upon the University machine was not broken. Nevertheless the dominance of the group led by Asutosh was soon resented and his methods laid him open to attacks by officials and non-officials who gladly seized their opportunity.<sup>5</sup>

1. GI-Edn., § 1, June 1915.

2. GI-Edn., Deposit 3, May 1914.

3. See Irene Gilbert in S. Rudolph (ed.), Education and Politics in India, 188.

4. Once described as "the third line of defence of India...a political thin black line tipped with steel - steel pens," the IES found themselves outflanked by the Vice-Chancellor's forces. Indian Daily News, 23 July 1914.

5. Reviewing this period in 1927 Prabashi described the conflict between Asutosh and his supporters and his opponents inside and outside the Senate in the traditional terms of daladali - factionalism: "By the use of different means Ashu Babu had filled the University with so many of his own nominees that during his life he and his dal remained in power." Prabashi, Ashwin 1334, 932-33, (Sept-Oct 1927).

By 1914 the existence of a "solid Bengali phalanx", who in the words of Henry James "vote solid", was well established. James might disparage their contribution, commenting that sound educationists with ideas and knowledge were "not only in a minority but a mere handful in both Senate and Syndicate," but he recognised that the Bengali Hindus under Asutosh were the dominant group - and that their dominance in a Senate which was very evenly divided - 47 Europeans, 47 Hindus and 6 Muslims - was very largely due to Asutosh's leadership. Under the Act of 1904, the Chancellor had the sole authority to nominate ordinary fellows but in practice the suggestion of the Governor as Rector was almost always accepted by him. One point which the formal constitution did not reveal, however, was that the Vice-Chancellor (that is Asutosh from 1906-1914) in practice used to have a very large voice in the selection of Ordinary Fellows by the Governor. This power to influence Asutosh used to the fullest extent.<sup>1</sup> The combined group of ex-officio and nominated Europeans did constitute a very considerable block - but an ineffective one. Most of the European ex-officio members were not resident in Calcutta for much of the time, and the European attendance record generally was poor compared to that of the Hindu members, especially on important occasions. James complained of the great under-representation of the Presidency College and suggested ten IES and PES men as suitable candidates for the Senate - but Butler replied by asking "Can you get any Europeans to attend? That is the difficulty."<sup>2</sup> And because in practice the Europeans who did attend found themselves in a minority they did not assert themselves very strongly<sup>3</sup>, (often barely half a dozen

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1. Sir Kenneth Wheare, Vice-Chancellor at Oxford, made the point "... almost all that any wise man wants can be got from the use of the power of Chairman." Quoted in G.C. Moodie and Rowland Eustace, Power and Authority in British Universities, 133.

2. Butler, Note, 16 March 1914. GI-Edn., 859-64, May 1914.

3. Carmichael to Chelmsford, 3 Sept 1916. GI-Edn. Deposit 21, Oct 1916. Carmichael made the point that Bengal officials in the Senate were reluctant to speak out because they were not sure what policies a distant Government of India wished to pursue.

attended Senate meetings at which the total present was about forty. The preponderance of Calcutta-based Hindus, to the virtual exclusion of mufassal interests, made it easier to secure a good Hindu turnout, on demand from the leadership, even if not perhaps voluntarily ). Moreover there was little hope of any rapid change in the Senate pattern. Thus to the urgings of Sharp that the number of Muslims there should be raised from six to about sixteen Butler replied with a marginal note, "I don't think we can fix a proportion. We must take opportunities as they arise. We can't take incompetent Muslims."<sup>1</sup> The one European or official member of the Senate who might have organised them against Asutosh was the D P I - but Hornell, D P I 1913 - 1923, was a weak man, as Sharp and the Maharaja of Burdwan when on the Governor's Council both noted, and quite unable to stand up to Asutosh.

The Syndicate, the important executive body, depended ultimately on the Senate majority, but within it the Europeans, mostly men of science, representatives of the Faculties of Medicine and Engineering, were only six on a body which was sixteen strong, and there was no Muslim till 1920. Of this small body the Vice-Chancellor was ex-officio chairman which meant that he was able to shape agendas and their timing as he wished. (Even the larger Senate could be manipulated: there were IES complaints that he called meetings at very short notice and when his opponents were likely to be absent from Calcutta.)<sup>2</sup> As a result James was to be found complaining "I sit there now week after week with not an Englishman present besides myself, except when Colonel Calvert and Colonel Deare may stay till the medical agenda are disposed of. I am perfectly aware that if I try to oppose any action recommended to the Syndicate by the Vice-Chancellor, I shall find myself in a minority of one, or with possibly the support of a single vote. I have experienced this sufficiently often to be somewhat

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1. Butler, Note, 13 April 1914. Ibid. Number of Muslims rose to 11 by 1919.

2. See Irene Gilbert in S. Rudolph (ed), Education and Politics in India, 188.

chary of intervention. The result is not good for the Government of India but very evil."<sup>1</sup> C.J. Hamilton, the Minto Professor of Economics at Calcutta University, recorded a somewhat similar opinion but in a non-partisan manner and without the vehemence of James. The character of the Syndicate, noted Hamilton, fairly reflected the character of the Senate and the opinion of the Vice-Chancellor. Although eleven out of fifteen members of the Syndicate were elected by the various Faculties, the opinion of the Faculties in the case of Arts, Science and Law was virtually the same as the opinion of the Senate. The division of opinion in the Syndicate with six Europeans and ten Indians would usually be about nine to seven in a full meeting in favour of what Hamilton called "Indian opinion" but Europeans attended much less regularly. Faculty members, particularly those in the Arts Faculty, were not necessarily experts, but merely reproduced the opinion of the Senate.<sup>2</sup>

The Postgraduate Departments of the University were even more the creations and creatures of the Vice-Chancellor. The appointments to the Law College were beyond the reach of the Government of India, as this College, founded by the University, did not fall within the purview of the Act of 1904, and the same was true of the Science College. The Postgraduate Arts and Science Departments both had constitutions and administrative machinery carefully designed to shield them from Government interference and entrench the power of the Vice-Chancellor. Both Departments had a tripartite structure of Council, Executive Committee and Boards of Higher Studies. In a certainly antagonistic but also quite penetrating analysis the historian R.D. Banerjee demonstrated how well these bodies served Asutosh's purposes. From the very large, even unwieldy Councils any exterior influence, good or bad,

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1. James to Sharp, 11 March 1914. GI-Edn., 859-64, May 1914.

2. C.J. Hamilton, Memorandum. GI-Edn., Deposit 23, March 1915.



had been excluded; they were "packed with members of the teaching staff of the Post-Graduate Department", and carefully designed to make any proposal seem "an authoritative statement from great scholars engaged in Post-Graduate work, among whom were the heads of thirteen first-class colleges in Calcutta."<sup>1</sup>

The Executive Council consisted almost entirely of Post-Graduate teachers, "It is very well known that the paid members of the staff of the University are not allowed to have any independent opinion. The fate of Mess. Tarakeswar Chakravarty and Charu Chandra Biswas ... terrified the rest of the free-thinking members."<sup>2</sup>

The Boards of Higher Studies consisted almost entirely of teachers. Since one of their functions was to appoint lecturers and fix their salaries applicants for posts were compelled to support the system and to accept the decisions of the heads of departments. A lecturer "knowing that his re-appointment lies in the hands of this Board must remain a silent spectator of the sham research work... or he will be sacked at the end of his first term as an inconvenient dissenter who disturbs the harmony of the family compact." The Boards selected texts and recommended books, and they were responsible for the standard and conduct of examinations and the appointment of examiners. "These powers" Banerjee wrote, "are more dangerous than any .... If the group of teachers ... have the sole power of fixing the standard of Post-Graduate examinations and the appointment of examiners, then in the interest of their own skins they will fix the standards as low as possible. In outward show and camouflaging the late Sir Asutosh Mookerjee was a past-master, and an outsider judging from the calendars and the printed regulations will not be able to judge the amount of sham existing in the teaching and examinations in the Post-Graduate Department."<sup>3</sup>

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1. The Modern Review, Sept 1925, 339-345.

2. Ibid.

3. The Modern Review, Sept 1925, 339-345. He instanced the case of the historian Sir Jadunath Sarkar who was got rid of as an examiner after he had showed how out of date the University lecturers in history were.

Over the years Asutosh successfully built up an image of himself as a fearless fighter for the national cause. But at the same time he had worked to secure an iron grip over the affairs of the University. The enormous expansion of the University provided Asutosh with an opportunity to dispense generous patronage to his relations, allies and admirers.<sup>1</sup> The total expenditure of the University which had been Rs.530,000 in 1911-12, in four years rose to Rs.955,000.<sup>2</sup> A not insignificant part of this money went into the pockets of the friends, relations and satellites of Asutosh. The selection of examiners, paper setters, and text-book writers, and the allocation of contracts - all financially rewarding - were quite often used by the Vice-Chancellor with an eye to secure his influence in the University. Intolerant of any opposition, he was generous to his friends but ruthless in his dealings with people who dared raise their voices against him.

The accounts were in the hands of a committee, annually more or less hand-picked by Asutosh, called the Board of Accounts which consisted of three members - men of the teaching profession with little or no executive capacity. They were particularly selected by the Vice-Chancellor and Sharp noted, "as recipients of numerous personal favours at his hands, they are under a very great obligation to him. They frame the budget, they spend the money and they keep the accounts<sup>3</sup>." At one time, Sharp complained, the accounts and accounts reports used to be circulated to the Members of the Senate and then laid before the Senate. That practice had been stopped and it had become difficult to ascertain anything from the Minutes without going through the whole set of them. Formerly an index used to be given - this had also stopped. Giving

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1. A report by Hughes Buller, Director, Central Intelligence, Bengal of 15 Sept 1913 listed some 100 Professors and Readers appointed by the University in the Post-Graduate Department, and another 45 Professors in the Law College. "There is no fixed principle governing the scale of remuneration. The will of the Vice-Chancellor is the law on the subject. He can pay a man whatever he likes." GI-Edn., A4, Jan 1914.

2. Accountant General's (Bengal) Report - The Calcutta Review - I, October-November 1922.

3. GI-Edn., A4, Jan. 1914.

detailed accounts in the Minutes (1904-1905) was another practice that had been abandoned, to be replaced by abstracts only<sup>1</sup> - items of expenditure were disposed of in the Minutes in one or two lines without any details.

The University became a favourite haunt of what Henry Sharp called "pluralists" - one and the same person holding many posts and earning a correspondingly handsome amount. One of the most lucrative forms of remuneration was the award to an author of recognition of his school text-books - the University had the power to prescribe text-books for the two highest classes of secondary schools<sup>2</sup>. Another was remuneration to authors for books on special subjects. Examiners and paper setters also could earn relatively large amounts: Gauri Sankar De and Adhar Chandra Mukherjee, both teachers at the Scottish Church College in Calcutta were Head Examiners in Mathematics and History respectively for Matriculation from 1900. They were, according to the Basumati, the weekly with the second largest circulation in Bengal, staunch devotees of Asutosh<sup>3</sup>. Since candidates tended to buy text-books written by paper setters it was, said the Basumati, unfair to appoint such authors Head Examiners not for one or two years but twelve years in succession. Adhar Chandra Mukherjee also graced the Board of Accounts three times, was a Fellow of the Senate, a member of the Arts Faculty, a member of the Boards of Studies in History, Economics, Political Philosophy and Geography, Paper setter in Intermediate Arts for Logic, Paper setter and Head Examiner in History for Matriculation and an author of a school text-book in History, his book heading the list of text-books prescribed by the University<sup>4</sup>. Biraj Mohan Majumdar, another friend of Asutosh, was, according to the Hitavadi, in the lucky position of holding five offices in the University - being a tabulator for Matriculation, Head

1. Minutes of the Senate, Calcutta University - 1912, 923-928.

2. The C.I.D. alleged that Asutosh had an interest in the book-selling firm of R. Cambray and Co. - owned by Thakurdas Kar (a Bengali) from which the University bought most of its books - in 1912 to the tune of rupees one lakh. GI-Edn., Deposit 5, July 1914.

3. The Basumati - 28 Dec 1912.

4. Calendar - Calcutta University - II, 1912.

Examiner in Geography, an examiner for Intermediate Law, and Vice-Principal as well as Professor of the Law College.<sup>1</sup> As tabulator, working for six weeks, he used to earn Rs.1000. The Head Examinership in Geography fetched him Rs.500 - he earned Rs.350 per month as Vice-Principal of the Law College.<sup>2</sup> His total earnings in a single year came to Rs.7,000 - all due to his connection with the University.<sup>3</sup> Why, the Hitavadi asked, should all the good things come to him? Again, the University, empowered to nominate one candidate for the Provincial Civil Service, selected Amarendranath Ray, a third class M.Sc. in Physics, because he was the son-in-law of Biraj Mohan.<sup>4</sup> Similarly J.N. Dasgupta, another Asutosh favourite, earned on various accounts, Rs.6,337; Dinesh Chandra Sen, a researcher in Bengali language and literature and the University Rs. 5,677, Satish Chandra Vidyabhushan, a Sanskrit scholar Rs. 4,000 in a single year.<sup>5</sup> All the leading newspapers, except the Bengalee, were critical of Asutosh's nepotism and favouritism in the University. An explanation for this reticence on the part of the Bengalee might be found in the fact that T.P. Mitter, the Manager and Sub-Editor of the paper, a neighbour of Asutosh, was under an obligation to Asutosh as Mitter's son-in-law, Kalikumar Datta, had passed the B.Sc. examination through the special favour shown by Asutosh - the marks secured by Datta being raised on Asutosh's instruction.<sup>6</sup>

Appointments in the University were also in the gift of the Vice-Chancellor.<sup>7</sup> Records were not always kept of all appointments and dismissals - sometimes they were done under verbal orders from the Vice-Chancellor. He had

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1. The Hitavadi - 13 Feb 1914.

2. Ibid.

3. The Nayak - 13 Nov 1915.

4. The Hitavadi - 13 Feb 1914.

5. The Nayak - 13 Nov 1915. Dinesh Chandra Sen later wrote a biography of Sir Asutosh Mookerjee. Vidyabhushan was Principal of the Sanskrit College - his University earnings almost doubled his salary.

6. Vide para 709, page 83, Senate Minute 1908 and result of B.Sc examination 1908 as given in the University Calendar for 1912-519.

7. There were 97 Clerical posts in the University with pay ranging from Rs.150 to Rs.30 per month. - Asutosh Papers at the National Library in Calcutta.

quite a few relations - nine in number - appointed in various capacities after the post-graduate expansion began in 1912. The Assistant Engineer, the Librarian of the University Law College, the Inspector of Messes, the Cashier and four other clerks all owed their jobs to their relationship with the Vice-Chancellor.<sup>1</sup> Friends and servants - like the family priest's son, the family physician's brothers - also came in for a share. Appointments of teachers in the University Law College were exclusively a University responsibility. Two types of men, Hughes Buller reported, seemed to have been particularly chosen for the College - men who had been long at the Bar but had failed to achieve success, or men who, having got themselves enrolled in recent years, found no briefs coming to them and approached the Vice-Chancellor for a job in the Law College<sup>2</sup>. S.C. Bagchi, Principal of the Law College had a salary of Rs.1,000 per month - as a barrister he had had no practice.<sup>3</sup> The Law College was not the only place in which dubious appointments of failed men occurred. Satish Chandra Roy was appointed an Assistant Professor of Economics at the University for seven years. He was a second class M.A. in Mathematics (passed in 1886) and had been a clerk in the Finance Department of the Government of India and then through Asutosh's influence had joined the Calcutta Corporation as an Accountant.<sup>4</sup> Reportedly the question of Roy's appointment was not discussed by the Senate which was influenced by the fact that Roy was Asutosh's brother-in-law.<sup>5</sup>

Though public attacks on Asutosh only fully developed late in his fourth

1. GI-Edn., Deposit 3, Jan, 1914.

2. Buller Report, 20 Aug 1913. GI-Edn., Deposit 3, July 1914.

3. Buller Report, 17 Sept 1913. GI-Edn., A4, Jan 1914.

4. Roy maintained that he left the Finance Department when passed over by a European. Sharp alleged he left in pique at being superseded by a Bengali. GI-Edn., Deposit 5, July 1914.

5. Letter in Nayak, 13 March 1913 stated that certain Matriculation papers had been made easy because the Vice-Chancellor's son was taking them. In an interview A.W. Mahmud, one-time Professor at Presidency College and D P I of West Bengal admitted that Asutosh expected Head Examiners to keep his sons in mind when they happened to be candidates.

term - as with the letter to Nayak in March 1913 alleging that certain Matriculation papers had been made easy because one of his sons was taking them that year - Government were quite clear by 1913 that there could be no question of a further term, and that a replacement must be found.<sup>1</sup> This time they felt none but a paid European Vice-Chancellor would be able to clean the "Augean stable."<sup>2</sup> In August 1913 Butler went to Calcutta to see things for himself. In discussion with the Governor, Lord Carmichael, Butler expressed the determination of the Government not to re-appoint Asutosh. Carmichael conceded that re-appointment would be regarded as a defeat for the Government of India.<sup>3</sup> Realising that he had over-reached himself, Asutosh hastened on 29 August, to write personally to Lord Hardinge in an effort to retrieve his position with the Government of India, feeling, as he said, that his character was at stake. He recalled his services to Government - he had done everything for the University and had sacrificed his popularity with the Indians, as he put it, "by reason of my unflinching support to Government during the worst days of the partition agitation .... And now", he wrote, "at the end of all this work, it is most grievous to find that it should even be suggested that I have not been thoroughly devoted to my Chancellor."<sup>4</sup> He denied that the

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1. Butler in a letter to H.E. Richards on 14 Feb, 1914, observed "Asutosh Mookerjee ought never to have been appointed for a fourth term of two years. He is altogether too autocratic and has got things into a nice mess." Butler Collection - Eur.F.116/18.

2. Butler to H.E. Richards - 23 April, 1914 - Butler Collection - Eur.F.116/18. Hitherto the Vice-Chancellorship had been an honorary position, the holder often continuing in his previous position, for instance as a judge, and drawing the salary for it. The growth of the functions of the University made it very much a full-time job - and required the undivided attention of the holder.

3. Butler to Hardinge - 25 August 1913 - Butler Collection - Eur.F.116/40. In the same letter Butler noted that Rajendranath Mukherjee, a leading Bengali businessman and industrialist, had confidentially urged Butler to appoint a European as the next Vice-Chancellor. A report by the Central Intelligence Department in Calcutta prepared in September 1913 referred to rumours and "many wild talks" among Calcutta Bengalis that through Carmichael's intercession Asutosh was going to have an extension because the Viceroy had been made to realise the indispensability of Asutosh. There were reports of Butler being silenced, of Sharp making an unqualified apology to Asutosh and of the imminent climb down of the Government of India in order to soothe irate public opinion. One could, said the Report, spend four pice and go to the "Swadeshi Mela to hear much nonsense of this kind". GI-Edn., Deposit 3, July 1914.

4. Asutosh to Hardinge, 29 Aug 1913. Butler Collection Eur.F.116/40.

Senate entertained any feelings of hostility to the Government of India, claiming rather that many members of the Senate were irritated by the tone and expression of letters from the Education Department. He therefore asked to see Hardinge in Simla and also to have Hardinge receive an address from the University when the latter visited Calcutta in the winter of 1913. Both requests were turned down.<sup>1</sup>

However, against the promptings of Sharp, Butler was prepared to avoid too open a confrontation with Asutosh. He recognised that the run on M.A. classes had been far greater than expected and "that many makeshift and unsatisfactory arrangements had had to be made", he hoped that when Asutosh retired "his relatives and friends, or at any rate some of them (would) gracefully withdraw".<sup>2</sup> Government had effectively asserted itself on the three Assistant Lecturers issue and was about to appoint a Committee of Enquiry.<sup>3</sup> With a new Vice-Chancellor university affairs should be restored to order.

So the search was on for a paid European Vice-Chancellor "to clear up the present state of affairs" as a Departmental memorandum put it.<sup>4</sup> Sharp suggested Robert Nathan an I.C.S. officer then serving as a Divisional Commissioner in Bihar who had headed the Dacca University Committee and had been D.P.I. of Bengal.<sup>5</sup> Both Butler and Sharp thought that the prior approval of the Secretary of State for India would be unnecessary. But the Finance Department advised otherwise - "the conversion of this honorary appointment into a whole-time salaried appointment held by a Government officer involves an unusual departure of administrative policy."<sup>6</sup> So on 19 December 1913, a confidential despatch

1. Asutosh to Hardinge, 29 Aug 1913. Butler Collection Eur.F.116/40.

2. Butler to Carmichael, 6 Nov 1913. GI-Edn., Deposit 3 July 1914.

3. Butler, Note, 24 Oct 1913. Ibid.

4. Sharp, Note, 19 Sept 1913. GI-Edn., A10-12, April 1914.

5. Ibid.

6. J.B. Brunyate, Note, 27 Oct 1913. Ibid.

from the Government was sent to Lord Crewe, the Secretary of State for India, spelling out the need for such an appointment.

Within a week Calcutta newspapers came out with a strong denunciation of the rumoured proposal. Such an appointment, the Dainik Bharat Mitra felt, would surely destroy the integrity of the post. The paid Vice-Chancellor would be an obedient government servant and whatever little independence the University still enjoyed would be gone<sup>1</sup>. The Bengalee was equally emphatic in its condemnation "... no greater mistake could be made than the appointment of a paid Vice-Chancellor who would look at all things from the official standpoint alone which, as past experience tells us, is often a very different one from that of the children of the soil interested in educational progress of the country."<sup>2</sup> However, the Bengalis did not stop short at mere speculation and complaint. Tarak Nath Palit, the lawyer and benefactor of the University, sent a telegram to Krishna Govinda Gupta, the Bengali Member of the Secretary of State's Council for India, warning that there was bound to be an agitation in Calcutta, already excited by the proposal to transfer school recognition from the University to the Bengal Department of Education.<sup>3</sup>

Both hopes and fears were extinguished, however, by Crewe, who intervened to scotch all thought of a paid Vice-Chancellorship. The Education Department was much put out and Butler complained "I get no support from the India Office and that little reptile Gupta is a wire of intrigue with the Bengalis in Calcutta. Our most secret correspondence gets out through the India Office at home to Calcutta."<sup>4</sup> Asutosh also came in for his share of abuse; he had, accused Butler, pulled a lot of strings at the India Office and elsewhere. But no one knew more than the Education Member himself about the difficulties of finding a suitable

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1. Dainik Bharat Mitra, 26 Dec 1913. BNNR, Jan 1914.

2. The Bengalee - 28 Dec 1913.

3. Butler Collection - Eur.F.116/41.

4. Butler Collection, Butler to H.E. Richards - 14 Feb 1914. Eur.F.116/18.



successor who, according to Crewe's suggestion, had better be a non-official Indian.<sup>1</sup> To the surprise and dismay of the Government, their choice, Sir S.P. Sinha, who had the distinction of being the first Indian Member of the Viceroy's Council, refused the job, while Rashbehari Ghosh, another lawyer, though preferred by the Bengal Governor was unacceptable to the Government of India because of his anti-Government stand during the controversy over the appointment of the three university lecturers.<sup>2</sup> Hardinge then suggested Devaprasad Sarbadhikary, yet another successful lawyer, Solicitor to the University, as a stopgap arrangement until a European, probably a High Court Judge, could be appointed. "We should, I think, lose in dignity if we went hawking about the position to Indians any more", wrote Hardinge to Butler.

Both Hardinge and Butler knew that Sarbadhikary - "a mild gentleman"<sup>3</sup> as Butler called him - being a weak man, would practically be a cipher, very much under the spell of Asutosh who still retained a strong position within the University. But for the University, so Butler thought, "a little stewing in their own juice (would) do them no harm", especially as the Government hoped and believed that a near-bankrupt university would soon have to come to them for financial aid.<sup>4</sup> Hardinge quite agreed, since he too looked upon the financial difficulties of the University as Government's "chief weapon."<sup>5</sup> On 31 March 1914 Sarbadhikary was installed, the first non-official Indian to become Vice-Chancellor.

Meanwhile, the Government of India had been considering the possibilities of instituting a committee of enquiry to go into the

1. GI-Edn., A10-12, April 1914.

2. Hardinge to Butler, 11 Feb 1914. Butler Collection, Eur.F.116/61.

3. Butler to H.E.Richards, 23 April 1914, Butler Collection, Eur.F.116/18.

4. Ibid.

5. Hardinge to Butler, 19 March 1914, Butler Collection, Eur.F.116/41.

affairs of the Calcutta University. The enthusiasm with which the whole Department of Education welcomed the proposal was an indication of the extent of its frustration in dealing with the University. The Government must have "a very tight control" over Calcutta because the malignant forces there were too strong even for a trustworthy Vice-Chancellor and an efficient Director of Public Instruction to resist. So "we must build as firmly as we can now",<sup>1</sup> observed the office note of the Department. However, Butler was against giving any prominence to control at the outset as that would prejudice the Committee's working.<sup>2</sup> As to the personnel of the Committee (or rather the inclusion or otherwise of Asutosh in the Committee) Butler and Sharp again had divergent opinions - the latter, although aware of the "obvious advantages" in having Asutosh, thought that the extraordinary scandals that had taken place under Asutosh's regime seemed to stand in the way of his being included.<sup>3</sup> But the Education Member, in view of Asutosh's good work, sought his co-operation. Both Butler and Nathan agreed that Lord Carmichael, the Bengal Governor, would be an excellent chairman.

But Carmichael, after an initial show of enthusiasm, declined the chairmanship. It was essential, he wrote to Hardinge on 5 November 1913, as Rector of the University, to preserve his position of impartiality in university affairs which would be impossible if he accepted the chairmanship.<sup>4</sup> An angry Butler complained to H.E. Richards "... Carmichael has completely sold me for the second time by going back on his word. He is a very pleasant person, and we get on famously but his words do not prepare me for his acts and I am limiting my relationship with the Bengal Government to the barest necessities at present."<sup>5</sup> It was not Butler alone who had

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1. Sharp, Note, 20 Sept 1913. GI-Edn., Deposit 15, April 1914. "The present system is hopeless - conspicuous in nothing but its numbers, its object not education at all but political influence and nepotism."

2. Ibid. Marginal note by Butler.

3. Ibid.

4. Copy in Butler Collection - Eur.F.116/40.

5. Butler to Richards. 14 Feb 1914. Butler Collection - Eur.F.116/40.

serious misgivings about Carmichael and his whole administration. The relationship between the Governments of India and Bengal had been getting more and more strained ever since Carmichael assumed charge of the province in early 1912. A man of liberal views and friendly disposition, he came to Bengal, as he understood it, with a mission - to pacify the discontent in the recently reunified province.<sup>1</sup> He was determined on winning the sympathy of the general public and the press and hoped in this way to reconcile the different communities and put an end to terrorism.<sup>2</sup>

But what he won in popular esteem in Bengal, he lost in the eyes of the Central Government in Delhi. They had long thought his administration to be extraordinarily weak, wondering how the Governor could "get through his term of office by smiles and pleasant words and curiosity and dinners".<sup>3</sup> Butler came down to Calcutta to establish good relations, because although there had been no outward quarrel, there was not that co-operation for which he had hoped. What he saw appalled him. He found the Governor untrustworthy, indecisive, and with an open admiration for people like Asutosh and Rashbehari Ghosh - persons who were in the bad books of the Government of India. Similarly, Carmichael's officials and advisers did not have "the least idea of what they wanted done. Everyone in Bengal seems to spend a good deal of time in fighting and plotting and anticipating plots."<sup>4</sup> The real trouble, according to Butler, was that the Bengal Government and officials were "instinctively on the defensive. It is very difficult to make them take a line."<sup>5</sup> Reginald Craddock, the Home Member of the Government of India, took an even more gloomy view of Bengal and the problems that surrounded it when he went on a fact-finding mission

1. Broomfield, 42.

2. Ibid.

3. Butler to Richards, 27 Feb 1914. Butler Collection - Eur.F.116/18.

4. Butler to Hardinge, 25 August 1913. Butler Collection - Eur.F.116/40.

5. Ibid.

to Calcutta. The Hindu middle classes in Bengal, Craddock wrote in a long minute on the situation in Bengal, through an uncontrolled acquisition of English education, were swelling the ranks of disappointed and half-educated men who fell easy victims to the writings of a seditious press. It was a very evil society that the system had produced and strong remedial measures were called for.<sup>1</sup>

But so far as the control and administration of education were concerned, the Bengal Government had its own grievance against the Central Government. Under the Indian Universities Act of 1904, the Government of Bengal had no legal status in regard to the University of Calcutta. The Lieutenant-Government was given the status of Rector, but he had no formal powers save that of serving as a "post office" between the University and the Central Government, since all correspondence between them passed through his hands. From 1912 when the Lieutenant-Governorship was abolished in favour of a full Governorship of Bengal in law the post of Rector vanished too<sup>2</sup>, although the Central Government continued to consult the Bengal Government out of courtesy in matters of detail. The Private Secretary to the Governor received the letters from the University which were then forwarded to the Education Secretary, with the remarks, if any, of the Governor. The Bengal Education Secretary then examined the letter and made any remarks he thought fit, in consultation if necessary with the Director of Public Instruction. In the great majority of cases the Education Department of Bengal hardly made any comment - it was more often the Government of India who used to press Bengal for an opinion.<sup>3</sup>

This was an anomalous situation which had its origin in the very wide educational jurisdiction once enjoyed by Calcutta University, extending over Bihar, Orissa, Assam, and Burma which gave the University the status of an "imperial" institution. Although by 1913, the

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1. Broomfield, 75-77.

2. Carmichael to Chelmsford, 3 Sept 1916. GI-Edn., Deposit 21, Oct 1916.

3. GB-Gen. Edn., 14-20. A1-4.

Government of India had announced their plans to split up Calcutta University's jurisdiction by establishing Universities at Patna, Rangoon and Dacca, the Bengal Government was unhappy with its lack of any control over its only university. In 1912 it did, politely suggest "in view of the removal of the Government of India from Calcutta, it would be desirable to alter the law so as to make the Government of Bengal 'the Government' under the Act in relation to the Calcutta University."<sup>1</sup> But this was turned down as unacceptable until other regions came to have universities of their own. Thus snubbed the Bengal Department of Education withdrew into a studied indifference refusing to be "dragged into every quarrel or difference of opinion between the Government of India and the University"<sup>2</sup> so long as that Government controlled the University.

The fact that university education was only a part, though an important and inseparable part of the educational system made it still more certain that divided responsibility would lead to friction between the two governments. What was a polite suggestion at the beginning became a more insistent demand when relations between the Central Government and the University became strained, with the Provincial Government cast in the role of an unwilling intermediary in the struggle. As public opinion rallied to the side of the University, the Provincial Government, denied any legal status in university affairs yet intimately involved in running the colleges and schools, often had to intervene on behalf of those very institutions. There were occasions when the Bengal Government, unable to have its own way, found other means to put pressure on the Central Government to hand over the University. Such tactics could not but irritate the Government of India, who laid part of the blame for their trouble with the University at the door of the Provincial Government. "One of the main reasons why we have failed

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1. GB-Gen.Edn., 14-20. A1-4.

2. Ibid.

to reform the Calcutta University or even to attempt such reform" commented Sharp, "is that we have leaned (perhaps overmuch) on the Government of Bengal. The Government of India is the Government under the Act; but we have divided our responsibilities with Bengal and permitted the local Government to thwart us in several respects. The local Government are certainly not going to burn their fingers in our affair, especially as they think it ought to be their affair. What may be called the combative party in the University headed by Sir Asutosh Mookerjee has been quick to recognise this position and turn it to their advantage. Sir Asutosh is much feared by the Bengal Government, is a persona grata with the Rector's Private Secretary (Gourlay) and is able to bring considerable influence to bear." <sup>1</sup>

In this atmosphere of mutual bickering the proposal by the Government of India to institute a committee of enquiry did not have much chance of success. On Carmichael's refusal to chair it the Central Government dropped the idea. It was now Bengal's turn to revive the proposal, having been stirred into action by a long and very critical memorandum on the University by the Director of Public Instruction, W.W. Hornell <sup>2</sup>. The Bengal Government, while sending this on to Delhi, observed that admittedly there were serious flaws in the system of education in Bengal but that given the money available and past and present conditions in Bengal there must be a difference between what was ideal in university teaching and what was practicable. As for the Committee they suggested seven members - Frank Heath who had served as Secretary to the London University Commission, the Director of Public Instruction, Bengal, one Calcutta University professor recently appointed, Asutosh Mookerjee "who has probably more intimate knowledge than anyone else has of ... the university and who is so closely identified, in the mind of the public,

1. GI-Edn., Deposit 16. Aug 1915.

2. Hornell's charges were that Asutosh had become a faction leader "more or less covertly at first but finally openly;" that he had waged a vendetta against the affiliated colleges and disparaged Presidency College in a way "which is as ludicrous as it is dishonest;" that he had failed to apply to University Post-Graduate Departments the standards required for the affiliation of colleges to M.A. standard and had evaded Government control of standards.

with the Calcutta University that a Committee which does not include him is hardly likely to command general confidence ", a college representative such as H.R. James, who as a member of the Syndicate had experience of university administration, an English professor of Science and an English professor of Humanities - both from English universities.<sup>1</sup> The Government of India were quite taken aback by this packet of proposals. To the Education Department it was inconceivable that Bengal could suggest the former Vice-Chancellor rather than the serving Vice-Chancellor. Moreover, the Department thought the element from England was "excessive in quantity".<sup>2</sup> Butler was even more frank: "I do not like the idea of letting loose a lot of English educationists on an Indian University. They cannot really understand the conditions with which we have to deal out here. We use the nomenclature of English Universities for things which are totally different in standard and degree from what they are in Great Britain. We all know what is wrong and it is only a matter of men and money to put it right."<sup>3</sup>

Hence they proposed a different composition for the committee - Frank Heath; the Bengal D.P.I., a Calcutta University professor, recently appointed, to be nominated by the Vice-Chancellor, H.R. James, representing the Presidency College, G.C. Bose, Principal, the Bangabasi College, representing the private colleges, a Muslim, probably a Senate Member, to be selected by the Government of India, a college or university professor, nominated by the Syndicate, the Accountant General of Bengal, who was then Rai Bahadur Nriitya Gopal Basu and Brajendra Nath Seal, representing the general public interest.<sup>4</sup> The two governments could not agree on Asutosh - while Bengal pressed Asutosh's claims, the Central Government, apart from its intense dislike of Asutosh, felt it could not simply "throw over our

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1. GB to GI, 19 Dec 1914. GI-Edn., A55-87, June 1915.

2. Sharp, Note, 5 Jan 1915. Ibid.

3. Butler, Note, 20 Feb 1915. Ibid.

4. GI-Edn., A55-87. June 1915. Seal was George V Professor of Moral and Mental Philosophy at Calcutta University. This Chair was financed by the Government of India.

Vice-Chancellor who gets no support from the authorities in Calcutta."<sup>1</sup>

Indeed this was an unenviable situation for the supreme Government - they had replaced a strong vice-chancellor with a "mild gentleman" only to find his position being undermined in the Senate by Asutosh's faction with the tacit connivance of the Bengal Government.

Devaprasad Sarbadhikary, the new Vice-Chancellor, kept complaining to the Government of India about his lack of power, funds and support in the University, while Asutosh was strengthening his position by getting himself elected to the Senate (by the Registered Graduates)<sup>2</sup>, as Dean of the Faculties of Arts and Law, as President of the Boards of Studies in Law, Mathematics, Sanskrit, Sanskritic Studies and Philosophy, and as chief of the Board of Accounts, of the Residence Committee, the Library Committee and the Libraries Executive Committee.<sup>3</sup> All these positions, taken together, could add up to quite an impressive range of patronage. "It does not," wrote Sarbadhikary, "look like cutting off all connections with the University." Asutosh was trying to organise an anti-government party in the University,<sup>4</sup> and since the Government of India were a thousand miles away, the new Vice-Chancellor, as their representative, became the main target of their attack. For example, two cases of delayed applications made by the Government College at Chittagong and the Wesleyan

1. Butler, Note, 26 Jan 1915. GI-Edn. A55-87. June 1915.

2. Ibid. Reported at a meeting with Sharp and Butler in Calcutta on 16 Jan 1915.

3. The Bengalee of 16 Sept 1914 requested Asutosh to stand for election to the Senate as he was not likely to be nominated to the Senate by the Government of India.

4. The Dainik Chandrika of 23 January, 1915, sarcastically narrated how Asutosh, not a member of the Syndicate, managed to find a place in the Syndicate meeting which awarded examinership in order to protect his supporters. One syndic, Mahendranath Ray, conveniently fell ill so that Asutosh, as Dean of the Faculty of Arts, took his place in that particular meeting. The paper commented, "Alas, Sir Harcourt, and Mr. Sharp. You can draft letters and resolutions, but who are you to dare to open your mouth - there were James, Sarbadhikary, Satish Chandra Vidyabhushan, J.N. Dasgupta, U.N. Brahmachari. Do you still ask why we love Sir Asutosh?. He bears the name of the great god Mahadeva, and like him is the lord and protector of ghosts and cows." (Mahadeva, is another name of Siva who rides a great bull with ghosts as his regular companions.) BNMR, Feb 1915.

5. GI-Edn. Deposit 20, Sept. 1915.



Mission College in Bankura for affiliation to the Intermediate standard were used by Asutosh's party to show up the administrative mismanagement of the new regime. Asutosh urged the Senate not<sup>to</sup> pass these recommendations as they violated the clear orders of the Government, conveniently forgetting that while in office he himself had broken those very orders.<sup>1</sup> For the Vice-Chancellor, it became a matter of personal prestige and it was on his repeated requests that Harcourt Butler in spite of Sharp's opposition granted retrospective affiliation to one college (Bankura Mission College), though he rejected that of the Chittagong Government College.<sup>2</sup> But though the Government of India had come to their Vice-Chancellor's rescue in the case of the Bankura College they refused to respond to his appeals for financial aid, except on condition that the University acknowledged that its post-graduate classes required Government affiliation just as the colleges did for their undergraduate courses.<sup>3</sup> "Until the University admits this principle even without legislation, the question of giving any financial assistance cannot even be considered."<sup>3</sup>

However, the financial irregularities during Asutosh's period in office provided the Vice-Chancellor's party with powerful ammunition with which to counterattack the other faction.<sup>4</sup> Their attempts to publish detailed statement of expenditure by the University were at first blocked by their opponents at the beginning but the vernacular press came to the help of the official party by demanding publication.<sup>5</sup> When instances of irregularities and favouritism came to light, the more influential papers all joined in a chorus of protest, as has been noted. The Nayak sought the remedy in a European Vice-Chancellor and still later launched a strong attack on the

1. GI-Edn. Deposit 9, Sept 1915.

2. Ibid.

3. Sharp, Note, 18 Jan 1915. GI-Edn., A55-87. June 1915.

4. The official party included, among others, W.A.J. Archbold, the Principal of Dacca College, R.E. Watson, an Indian Education Service teacher at Dacca College and Rajendranath Mukherjee, the leading Bengali industrialist.

5. The Hitavadi - 16 July 1915; the Sanjivani - 15 July 1915.

University, "the Golamkhana... the place where Babudom congregates", for such display of partisan spirit on a grand scale. Never before was there such a big schism between black and white, the Babus and the Sahebs, affecting the whole university."<sup>1</sup> The Basumati while deprecating the racial quarrel in the Senate observed that it was because of European indifference that the Indians had gained and misused control in the Senate.<sup>2</sup>

Meanwhile, <sup>Butler</sup> had decided that an enquiry, at a time when feelings were running so high, would not be of any use. Accordingly he told Lord Carmichael and P.C. Lyon that the Government of India "could not accept the position of slighting the Vice-Chancellor appointed by themselves, particularly when the cause of the inquiry is the action of Sir Asutosh Mookerjee". Bengal would no doubt like an inquiry, he noted, but "I think their object is to create an embarrassing position in which we shall throw over the Calcutta University to them."<sup>3</sup> In any case he had "definitely and finally come to the conclusion that it is perfectly useless to attempt to reform the university while the Bengal Government is constituted as it is at present and while Mr. Lyon has the charge of the portfolio of education."<sup>4</sup> So things must lie over until after the war - intervention would bring about a very considerable agitation. "Things are certainly not right on paper but they are certainly not so bad as to justify us in embarking light-heartedly on this agitation in which we shall most certainly be left alone."<sup>5</sup> Interestingly, this advice to Hardinge came from a person who eighteen months <sup>before</sup> ago had written critically to a friend saying that the Viceroy was afraid of Asutosh and the Calcutta University.<sup>6</sup>

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1. The Nayak - 21 1915 and 29 1915.

2. The Basumati 1.10.1915.

3. Butler, Note, 20 Feb 1915. GI-Edn., A55-87. June 1915.

4. Ibid. P.C. Lyon, I.C.S. was a member of the Governor's Council. Like Carmichael he was politically liberal. See Broomfield, 91-93.

5. Ibid.

6. Butler to Lady Griffin, 11 Sept 1913. Butler Collection Eur.F.116/24.

So the problem of reorganising the University on what the Government of India considered a proper footing proved intractable. Henry Sharp could not hide his frustration when he wrote that the day of changed machinery at Calcutta University seemed to be constantly postponed and in the meantime bad practices were beginning to crystallise and would be more difficult to eradicate. "Our efforts to get things done have not proved so successful as to warrant us in postponing action in individual cases until a general change is possible. We are not to have a paid Vice-Chancellor at present; the committee of enquiry has been postponed . . . . the legislation regarding the recognition of schools has been hanging fire for two years."<sup>1</sup>

Even in such matters as the appointment of a new Vice-Chancellor the Government experienced considerable difficulty. The policy of nominating a weak Vice-Chancellor had turned out less successful than anticipated except in the matter of improved personal relations between the Vice-Chancellor and the Department. Long before the Vice-Chancellor's term was to expire, the Viceroy had personally instructed Henry Sharp to explore the possibilities of finding a new Vice-Chancellor, who in a still to be reformed university would "work the finances honestly and let us know the truth about them, who will stand up to Sir A. Mukharji."<sup>2</sup> Sharp made another point, in favour of seeking a European candidate, that if Indians held the post for too long a spell they might appear to have "a prescriptive right" to it which it would be difficult to upset when necessary. For nearly fifty years Vice-Chancellors had been invariably Europeans and generally officials with one exception - that of Gurudas Banerji (1890-1892), who was an Indian judge. From 1906 Indians had held the office. For the Government, there were obvious advantages

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1. Sharp, Note, 9 Feb 1914. GI-Edn., A10-12, April 1914.

2. Sharp, Note, 24 July 1915. GI-Edn., A41-43, Feb 1916. Various financial statements by the University had been, "clearly mendacious", Sharp noted, and Asutosh, who as chairman of several Boards wielded much patronage, had with his 'protégés' successfully opposed requests for detailed statements on expenditure.

in such a policy - these appointments were always popular with the press and the public. But had the University flourished under them ?, asked the Department. "From being at least a decently conducted institution, it has lapsed into educational and financial chaos and has become honeycombed with nepotism, intrigue and extra-educational influences."<sup>1</sup> But if a European was to be appointed, where could one be drawn from ? One answer might have been, from the judiciary, but in just a decade, opinions in the Department had turned full circle regarding the suitability of judges as Vice-Chancellors. Whereas in 1906, H.H. Risley, the Home Secretary had thought that judges would make good Vice-Chancellors because of their influence on a lawyer-dominated Senate, Henry Sharp held the opposite view: "Bengal is mainly ruled by the Calcutta Bar Library, which is not a healthy form of a government. A High Court Judge is naturally susceptible to its influence and control."<sup>2</sup> And though the names of several European officials were considered none was found with enough spare time. In the end Sarbadhikary was given an extension for another two years.<sup>3</sup>

However the prospect for an enquiry brightened a little when Harcourt Butler, who had vetoed the idea earlier, went to England on leave in April 1915. Sir Claude Hill, the Acting Member in charge of Education, with a little prodding from the Department, "could not resist the temptation to have a fling at the Calcutta University and he committed the viceroy and the council to an enquiry "<sup>4</sup> This was in spite of Butler's advice to Hill that Calcutta University should be left alone<sup>5</sup>. But, in view of the very recent rejection of Bengal's suggestion for an enquiry committee it was not easy to resuscitate the proposal. As a way out the Department of

1. Sharp, Note, 24 July 1915. GI-Edn., A41-43, Feb 1916.

2. Ibid.

3. Butler to Richards, 20 Oct 1915. Butler Collection. Eur.F.116/18.

4. Ibid.

5. Butler to Richards, 20 Oct 1915. Butler Collection. Eur.F.116/18. Butler added that if the University asked for grants Government "had a perfect answer for them in the present financial situation ".

Education offered to transfer the university to Bengal but asked for co-operation and consultation from it in the great deal of preliminary work that needed to be done before an enquiry and transfer could take place.<sup>1</sup> In this way, Butler's wish not to have any controversy before the war was over would not be infringed, while "the bait (of transfer) held out to Bengal would go far to remove the apprehensions he felt...."<sup>2</sup> According to this plan, Lord Hardinge was to write to Lord Carmichael a "private and very confidential letter" - this was to prevent one of those leaks which were so much more characteristic of Bengal than of any other province - suggesting the transfer and, as a preliminary, joint meetings between high officials of the two governments.<sup>3</sup>

Before Hardinge wrote to Carmichael, the plan was discussed by the whole Executive Council as a "very important question of policy is therein involved."<sup>4</sup> Hardinge prefaced the discussion by saying that he was personally "heartily sick" of the University, which the Government of India could never administer properly from such a distance. On the other hand, the Government of Bengal would never do so as long as they had no control over the University - although given the weakness of that Government Hardinge doubted whether they would have more success than the Central Government had had. The Council supported the move, with the European Members insisting on the necessity of some sort of central watch on the University even after the transfer so that Bengal did not allow "an institution so powerful for good or for evil . . . . . to be perverted to evil ends which would affect not Bengal, only, but the whole of India."<sup>5</sup> The Finance Member W.S. Meyer, while regretting the opportunity lost in the past of imposing conditions before "such liberal" grants had been made, cautioned that the proposed

1. Hill, Note, 16 May 1915. GI-Edn., Deposit 16, Aug 1915.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

4. Hardinge, Note, 14 June 1915. Ibid.

5. R.W. Carlyle, Note, 17 May 1915. GI-Edn., Deposit 16, Aug 1915.

committee should be "warned off the relatively easy solution (for them) of proposing a large increase in government grants."<sup>1</sup>

In the discussion that followed between the two governments, P.C. Lyon, the Member of the Bengal Executive Council for Education, asked for an early transfer while Butler, back in charge, sought to keep Asutosh out of the committee because once included he would dominate it. But once again all the proposals proved abortive, for Butler, at the drop of a hint from the Vice-Chancellor that Motilal Ghosh, the editor of the Amrita Bazar Patrika had articles ready for opening an agitation, decided against having an enquiry after all.<sup>2</sup> Both Butler and Hardinge had left India before the committee was finally formed. However, before Butler left in October 1915 to take up the governorship of Burma, he took the chance to record his views on the University.

The problem of the University was as much political as it was educational. The Bengalis, he felt, still being sore over the removal of the capital, were simply "itching for a peg to hang an agitation on". The Bengal Government could not be relied on for consistent support and the tendency was "to manoeuvre the Government of India into a political mess."<sup>3</sup> Asutosh was an angry man with great influence in the University "and he hates the Government of India very cordially." The policy deliberately adopted by Butler and accepted by Hardinge had been to give the University rope; to secure, by nomination of Fellows, the revision of the Senate and the removal of some of Mukharji's men .... The policy is bearing fruit, the Senate are beginning to quarrel among themselves... the debate the other day is an encouraging result of our policy."<sup>4</sup> He did not believe that the University would ever reform itself from inside, but an atmosphere was growing up in which, if the Government did not force the pace, it would be possible to get some reform and an enquiry which would inevitably end in either the curtailment of the university classes, which

1. W.S. Meyer, Note, 21 June 1915. GI-Edn., Deposit 16, Aug 1915.

2. Ibid.

3. Butler, Note, 4 Oct 1915. GI-Edn., A54-76, Dec 1915.

4. Ibid. Butler referred to debates in the Senate early in July 1915.

would be extremely unpopular, or the provision of very large funds to remove the evils to which Government had drawn attention and which the University could not remove of itself without large financial assistance.<sup>1</sup>

Butler was succeeded at the Education Department by Sir Sankaran Nair - a South Indian lawyer. He did not share Butler's or Sharp's views about Asutosh and he was far more ready to listen to Carmichael's suggestions regarding Calcutta University. The transfer of the University to Bengal came to be demanded by public opinion also, as was reflected in a resolution moved by Surendranath Banerjee in the Imperial Legislative Council.<sup>2</sup> Banerjee maintained that the university system of a province should be in direct touch with and controlled by the public opinion of that province. There were cases, he said, when mandates issued by the Government of India were carried out in defiance of the wishes of the Senate. The transfer of the University would place the Governor of Bengal at the head of the University. "That would be the first step towards freeing the University from ... official control; and as popular opinion in Bengal is a growing power, we shall soon bring the Chancellor of our University under our own control."<sup>3</sup>

In June 1916 the new Viceroy, Chelmsford, informed Carmichael of the Government's desire to hand over the University to Bengal as soon as the Patna, Rangoon and Dacca university schemes had materialised.<sup>4</sup> Carmichael, however, demanded an immediate transfer - Calcutta University, he argued, controlled only eight colleges in Bihar and two in Assam, whereas in Bengal it was responsible for forty one colleges.<sup>5</sup> Again, he strongly pressed Asutosh's claims, as President of the enquiry committee, the need for which Carmichael again stressed. Asutosh, Carmichael went on,

1. Butler, Note, 4 Oct 1915. GI-Edn., A54-76, Dec 1915.

2. Imperial Legislative Council Proceedings, 22 March 1916.

3. Ibid.

4. Chelmsford to Carmichael, 19 June 1916. Chelmsford Collection-Eur.E.264/17.

5. Carmichael to Chelmsford, 3 Sept 1916. GI-Edn., Deposit 21, Oct 1916.

was the outstanding Indian authority on higher education in Bengal with enormous influence which would ensure the public acceptance of the committee's findings. The present system had been inaugurated by him and it would be better to have him in the committee than outside it. Carmichael knew of no one else who as President "could get things through. No ordinary European official would tackle the obstruction or cope with the eloquence of the Bengalis."<sup>1</sup> The Viceroy's Council considered the question of transfer - all the members, with the exception of Sankaran Nair, opposed such a move until reform and reorganisation of the University had been accomplished on desirable lines.<sup>2</sup> On the insistence of Sankaran Nair the Government accepted Asutosh as the head of a small committee, but as a concession to the other members, promised to appoint another large commission with wider, comprehensive powers.<sup>3</sup> The minor committee was to review the existing facilities for post-graduate studies in the University and to suggest how the existing expenditure and resources for such studies might be put to the best use. (The committee was warned not to expect any further grants for post-graduate studies in the near future.) Its task would be merely to advise on possible improvements under existing conditions and not to "queer the pitch" by doing anything which the larger commission might find it necessary to undo.<sup>4</sup> The members of the Committee were <sup>Mookerjee,</sup> W.W. Hornell, the Bengal Director of Public Instruction; Brajendranath Seal, Professor of Philosophy, Calcutta University; W.C. Wordsworth, Principal, Presidency College; the Rev. R.G. Howells of the Serampore Missionary College; C.J. Hamilton, Professor of Economics, Calcutta University and P.C. Ray, a distinguished Scientist and educationist.

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1. Carmichael to Chelmsford, 3 Sept 1916. Chelmsford Collection - Eur. E.267/17.

2. Carmichael to Chelmsford, 3 Sept 1916, GI-Edn., Deposit 21, Oct 1916 and GI-Edn., A33, Sept 1916.

3. GI-Edn., A33, Sept 1916.

4. Ibid.



The Committee's report, submitted on 12 December 1916, was unanimous. During the past decade or so, the post-graduate system in Bengal had developed in an uncoordinated and haphazard manner - and it was out of this chaotic material that they had to evolve a policy and a suitable machinery for the post-graduate work in Calcutta. For this purpose they recommended that all post-graduate teaching in Calcutta should be centralised under the control of the University. In practice, this meant that the two Calcutta colleges, Presidency and Scottish Churches, would lose their affiliation for M.A. and M.Sc. teaching. Instead, it was proposed that to avoid wasteful duplication and competition all the available teaching expertise in Calcutta should be utilised by giving qualified college teachers a share in post-graduate teaching and administration.<sup>1</sup> Under the proposed system there would be four types of teachers in Calcutta who would undertake post-graduate teaching - teachers appointed and paid by the University; teachers lent, on the application of the University, either by government or by a private institution, who, during the time they worked under the University, would be university officers; qualified college teachers who, at the request of the University and for a remuneration to be decided by the University, would deliver a course of lectures on selected topics; and, finally, persons engaged in other than educational work, who, would on similar conditions, undertake to deal with special subjects in which they were authorities.<sup>2</sup> This last class of teachers would include experts on subjects like railway economics, banking, currency, international trade, numismatics, archaeology and meteorology. They might come from government departments or commercial bodies.

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1. Hundred Years, 191. In 1917-18, apart from the 107 Arts and Science post-graduate students at Presidency and 32 Arts students at Scottish Churches there were only eight other collegiate students, 5 at St Pauls and 3 at the Sanskrit College. These compare with the 1243 University post-graduate students in Arts. See Sadler Commission Report, II, 48 and 57.

2. Report, Committee on Post-Graduate Studies, Calcutta, 142.

Government sanction for the appointment of teachers would be limited to those whose salaries were to come from government funds; in all other cases Government could veto only on grounds other than academic. This was a very important change in view of the fact that hitherto the Government had jealously guarded against any encroachment on this power to sanction or veto a teaching appointment.

The essence of the proposed system was that a student who desired M.A. or M.Sc. instruction in Calcutta would have to register in the Senate House as a university student. He might attach himself to the college from which he had graduated, or, where that was not possible, to some other college in the city. The application of such an attached student would be forwarded to the University by the college, which would make itself responsible for his residence. (Students unable to attach themselves to a college might apply direct to the University which had to ensure their proper residence.) Every student thus registered, whether through a college or directly, would receive instruction from the university lecturers, who were to be drawn, as noted earlier, from four sources.<sup>1</sup>

The new scheme left post-graduate studies outside Calcutta practically where they had stood before the new system started. They might be conducted either by affiliated colleges or by university lecturers or by both. Dacca College for example had affiliation in English, while <sup>for</sup> Physics, Chemistry, History, Economics and Philosophy individual members of the staff of the College had been appointed university lecturers although they were able to cover only limited portions of each subject.<sup>2</sup> Of the 66 post-graduate students there, 48 were studying English full time, while the other 18 were taking what help they could from individual, qualified lecturers.

The 18 appeared in examinations as direct students of the University

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1. Report, Committee on Post-Graduate Studies, Calcutta, 151. One complaint frequently voiced, was that the living arrangements for post-graduate students in Calcutta were quite inadequate. The Committee proposed to make the colleges responsible for this - but the figures for 1917-18 show how unsatisfactory the situation was: only about one third of students were living in college hostels or messes, or with their parents, and only one in six in college accommodation. See Sadler Commission Report II, 57.

2. Sadler Report, II, 56.

post-graduate classes. Most mufassal and many Calcutta colleges did not have the resources to undertake post-graduate teaching which, unlike undergraduate and matriculation work, did not pay its way. When in 1915 the University offered to consider affiliation applications at post-graduate level not a single college applied.<sup>1</sup>

The Committee proposed to place control of post-graduate teaching in the hands of the post-graduate teachers themselves. Under the system in force until 1917, they had had no controlling voice in the direction of academic affairs. Notwithstanding the provision under the Act of 1904 for a certain proportion of teachers in the Senate and the Faculties the fact remained that in the Faculties and the Boards of Studies, where the most important academic decisions were taken - viz., the framing of courses, the selection of text-books and determination of standards, teachers were not well represented, post-graduate teachers least of all. Out of twelve members of the Board of Studies in English, only three took part in M.A. instruction, two of them as university lecturers and one as a professor in the Presidency College. Out of nine who constituted the Board of Studies in Sanskrit only two had any share in post-graduate teaching. While of the eight in the Arabic and Persian Board not one was associated with post-graduate teaching and in History, only three out of twelve were connected with post-graduate teaching.<sup>2</sup> This imbalance was due to the provision that only Senate members could have a place on the Boards of Studies and it was not possible for all post-graduate teachers in a particular subject to get into the Senate.<sup>3</sup>

The tripartite administrative structure of Councils, Executive Committee and Boards of Higher Studies proposed by the Committee for the post-graduate departments has already been outlined. At each level post-graduate

1. GB-Gen.-Edn., 1-4 1-4. A4-9, April 1917.  
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2. Sadler Commission Report, II, 63.

3. Ibid., 64.

teachers were the dominant element, though with heavy weightage in favour of Calcutta institutions and teachers. (On Council it was the heads of the Calcutta colleges who were ex-officio represented and on the Boards of Studies there was provision only for co-opting not more than two members from those engaged in post-graduate work outside Calcutta.) The other striking feature of the structure was the multitude of levels through which all decisions had to make their way - some doubtless quite formal but all providing scope for delay and perhaps for factionalism. Thus each Board of Studies prepared its own estimate of expenditure. Then the University Board of Accounts in consultation with the chairmen of the several Boards prepared a consolidated statement, which was scrutinised by the Executive Committee, passed to the Post-Graduate Council and so to Syndicate for final orders. The Committee also sought to give shape to the finance of post-graduate studies: a post-graduate teaching fund was to be created with contributions from the fees from the post-graduate students themselves plus one third from the general fee fund of the University, any grants that the Government might make, benefactions for this purpose and other sums that the Senate might authorise.<sup>1</sup>

The Government of India in the Department of Education to whom the report of the Committee was first submitted, considered the recommendations, in great detail. Only Henry Sharp expressed a general opposition to the scheme, which was "the very converse of that which the Government might be assumed to desire to attain by the creation of this committee."<sup>2</sup> Far from the position of the colleges being strengthened, they were to be deprived of their affiliation. They would be subject to new university bodies - and although Sharp had no objection to such bodies in principle

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1. Report, Committee on Post-Graduate Studies, Calcutta, 142-153. Fees from post-graduate students met about one fifth of the cost of the post-graduate departments.

2. Sharp, Note, 4 July 1916. GI-Edn., A41-45, Jan 1917.

and indeed he had himself suggested the need for some central bodies, he had never contemplated so elaborate a system as was proposed. Everything, including an important portion of the Presidency and Scottish Churches [Colleges] work, would be subordinated to a series of university bodies, mainly composed of teachers appointed by the University, over whom, according to these recommendations, the Government would no longer exercise any effective control. Because the report proposed government sanction only for the three chairs endowed by Government, other appointments being subject only to a notification to Government, who could object to them only for reasons other than academic qualification, the ultimate decision on all sorts of matters, including courses of study, would rest with the Senate which was largely a lay body.<sup>1</sup> Sharp had made his opposition to the Committee's proposals clear enough, though Nair was non-committal. On 26 January 1917, therefore, the report was sent on for their opinion to the Bengal Government, which was asked whether it would object to the report going before the Senate. In Calcutta the Education Member, Lyon, dissented from <sup>the</sup> report, mainly from an anxiety to safeguard the interests of the Presidency College - which was L.S.S. O'Malley's position too<sup>2</sup> - though he noted that the post-graduate students at Dacca had been left quite outside the new scheme. He therefore was in favour of postponing any action until the University Commission had reported.<sup>3</sup> Beatson Bell, who failed "to feel any enthusiasm for the suggestions of the Mookerjee Committee ", took much the same line.<sup>4</sup>

As has been noted earlier, the strongest opposition in Bengal to the University's post-graduate policies, from Presidency College, had been

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1. Sharp, Note, 20 Dec 1916. GI-Edn., A41-45, Jan 1917.

2. O'Malley, Note, 10 Feb 1917. GB-Edn., <sup>1-11</sup>/<sub>12</sub> 1-4. A4-9, April 1917.

3. Lyon, Note, 21 Feb 1917. Ibid.

4. Bell, Note, Feb 1917. Ibid.

fully backed by W.W. Hornell, the Director of Public Instruction and the senior IES man. But now, to the bafflement of Sharp and O'Malley, the Director, as a member of the Committee had approved and signed its report. Hornell therefore spoke for the proposals. He denied the charge of being a turncoat, arguing that the colleges, in the face of competition with a university offering cheaper education stood no chance of success. Of the 1,607 post-graduate students in Calcutta in February 1917 the University had 1,258 and its classes were growing daily at the expense of the others. He still condemned the existing position, but nothing which the Committee might propose could readily remedy that: "The whole educational structure is rotten and you are not going to put it right by tinkering up the roof." But it would at least be something to give the teachers some status as teachers. At the moment men of the calibre of Kuruville Zacharia<sup>1</sup> and J.C. Coyajee<sup>2</sup> had no say even over the selection of M.A. text-books - "these matters are decided by a Board of Studies on which sit certain university hacks like Dasgupta".<sup>3</sup> Currently the whole university M.A. and M.Sc. work was supervised in practice by the Registrar and Syndicate. At least the proposals would lessen that evil.<sup>4</sup>

The really strong defence of the report came, however from Lord Carmichael, supported by Shamsul Huda. Carmichael's unusually long note defended the Committee's solution to the post-graduate problem as "entirely reasonable," and acceptable to the Principal of Presidency College, to the D.P.I., and to Dr. P.C. Ray,<sup>5</sup> "all officers in whom Government reposes, great confidence". Financially it made the best use of limited resources. Calcutta University would take responsibility,

1. Zacharia, a South Indian Christian, an Oxford graduate, appointed to the IES in 1916, taught History at Presidency College.

2. Jahangir C Coyajee, B.A. (Bombay and Oxford), LL.B.(Cambridge) was Professor of Economics at Presidency College.

3. J.N. Dasgupta, B.A.(Oxford), appointed to the IES in 1918. Taught History at Presidency College, a favourite of Asutosh.

4. Hornell, Note, 19 Feb 1917, GB-Edn., I-U 1-4. A4-9, April 1917.

5. P.C. Ray, Palit Professor of Chemistry.<sup>12</sup>

helped by state funds which he hoped would now flow more freely. The post-graduate teachers would receive adequate representation in academic bodies even though the maintenance of post-graduate classes at the Presidency College, although ideally desirable, was not practicable. The mufassal colleges were left out, but then very few had any pretensions to post-graduate status and in any case ninety per cent of post-graduate students were in Calcutta. The Bengal Government recommended that the Senate be allowed to consider and report upon the Committee's proposals.<sup>1</sup>

The Senate debated the proposals of the Committee on 17 March and then appointed a panel of four, Sir Asutosh Mookerjee, Howells, Hornell and Seal, to draft regulations based upon the proposals. The draft regulations were then debated, and approved by a majority of the Senate, on 31 March, 14 and 16 April 1917, the whole debate being conducted quite dispassionately<sup>2</sup>. Instead of combining to abuse the Government of India and all its works, as had so often happened in the past, the members argued between themselves the important problem of the relationship between the University and the affiliated colleges, with little or no reference to Government.<sup>3</sup> Among the opponents of the scheme were a number of eminent men with no interests of their own in higher education to protect. Men like Gooroodas Banerjee, former judge of the Calcutta High Court and the University's first Indian Vice-Chancellor, or Bhupendranath Basu, Calcutta lawyer, Congress President, Member of the India Council and a future Vice-Chancellor,<sup>4</sup>, genuinely believed that the concentration of all post-graduate teaching under the University would harm the true interests of higher education by down-grading the good colleges of Bengal. Banerjee, who led the opposition,

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1. Carmichael, Note, 23 Feb 1917. GB-Edn.,  $\frac{I-U}{12}$  1-4. A4-9, April 1917.

2. See Hundred Years, 151-161.

3. Anderson, Note, 19 June 1917. GI-Edn., A51-56, July 1917.

4. Basu was Congress President in 1914, Member, Council of the Secretary of State for India, 1917 to 1924, Under-Secretary of State for India, 1921, Member of the Lee Commission, 1923, Vice Chancellor, Calcutta University 1923-24.

deprecatd unhealthy competition between the colleges, but declared that even so unhealthy competition was better than unhealthy stagnation.<sup>1</sup>

Most of the opposition came, however, from the principals or proprietors of individual colleges, who cherished their independence, valued the opportunity to do advanced work, and believed in the value of a collegiate structure. W.S. Urquhart, Principal of the Scottish Churches College, seconded by W.A.J. Archbold, Principal of the Dacca College - who described the University as "the sick man of India," moved the postponement of consideration of the proposals until the Calcutta University Commission had reported. Archbold doubted the wisdom of "breaking down the only strong organisation they had, which was the collegiate system" and he opposed a scheme so damaging to Presidency and Scottish Church and thus seemingly intended "to degrade the finest college in India and the one that came close after it ". In this he was echoed by Sureshprasad Sarbadhikary, one of Calcutta's most eminent surgeons and a founder of the Carmichael (now R.G. Kar) Medical College, who felt that the central university institution "would thrive by cannibalism ", and that Wordsworth, Principal of Presidency, by signing the report, had agreed to commit suicide. V.H. Jackson, Principal of Patna College, F.C. Turner of Dacca College, Peake of Presidency and Kumudini Kanta Banerjee, Principal of Rajshahi College - except Banerjee all of them IES men - shared the same fears and objections. However when Peake moved for the retention and extension of existing affiliations his amendment was lost by 14 to 35.<sup>2</sup>

The most serious effort to prevent acceptance of the proposed regulations came in the two April meetings when Sir Gooroodas Banerjee moved that the word 'mainly' be substituted for the word 'only' in the

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1. Senate Debates, Calcutta University Minutes, Part I, 1917, 318-353.

2. Senate Debates, Calcutta University Minutes, Part I, 1917, 318-353.



regulation which said that post-graduate teaching in Calcutta should be conducted "only in the name and under the control of the university ". Banerjee maintained that it was not necessary to disaffiliate the Presidency College and the Scottish Churches College, nor was it necessary to prohibit absolutely further affiliation whether in the interest of the students, of the colleges, or of the University. The amendment was lost 16 to 33.<sup>1</sup>

His last major amendment, described by Asutosh as designed to render the whole scheme nugatory, "to starve it completely" - was directed against the raising of Matriculation and Intermediate examination fees to provide funds for post-graduate teaching. This Gooroodas described as "taxing Peter to pay Paul", and he proposed instead that post-graduate fees be raised to make the classes self-supporting. He here touched upon a very sensitive point. The University in defending the low level of its post-graduate fees against the charge that they were designed deliberately to undercut its affiliated colleges had agreed that its aim "consistently with efficiency ", was to permit "the largest number of graduates to take advantage, of its M.A. teaching, that "it catered for the average middle-class family ". If the rich wished to pay more let them go Presidency College. Now it was the University which was accused of financial discrimination against the mass of poor middle-class families - as in the May issue of the Modern Review.<sup>2</sup> Banerjee argued, in any case, that post-graduate teaching was all very well, but it must be selective. The staff should be limited to a small number of first rate men to guide, instead of coach their students. "They should confine themselves to assisting the good student but not try their utmost to work up inferior material with mediocre agency at disproportionate expense." Nevertheless Banerjee's amendment was lost by a large majority.<sup>3</sup> The Senate approved the regulations by a

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1. Senate Debates, Calcutta University Minutes, Part I, 1917, 318-53.

2. Modern Review, XXI.5, May 1917, 605-07. The Review opposed the raising of Matriculations and Intermediate fees - and pointed out that the average Indian's income was only Rs30 a year.

3. Senate Debates, Calcutta University Minutes, Part I, 1917, 318-53.

comfortable majority.

On 14 June 1917 the new Bengal Governor, Lord Ronaldshay, forwarded the regulations, based on the Committee's report, to the Government of India. As Rector he summed up the advantages which he believed they offered: the teaching staff would be strengthened by concentration at one point, and with greater possibilities of specialization. The larger resources of the University would permit post-graduate work at a higher level than was possible in the colleges, while the presence of qualified college professors in the post-graduate Councils and of post-graduate students on the college rolls would give the colleges a continuing function. Above all the organisation and control of post-graduate studies by the teachers themselves would be a great improvement.<sup>1</sup> As Governor, however, Ronaldshay spoke with a different voice, as did his government, accepting the principles of the scheme, but reserving approval until "the precise effect which the application of these principles will have, particularly upon the Presidency College", had been fully worked out.<sup>2</sup>

The Government of India discussed the regulations during the second half of June. George Anderson, the Assistant Secretary, who was also a signatory to the Committee's report, defended the recommendations. His grounds were efficiency and economy. The system of teaching through the agency of practically independent affiliated colleges caused wasteful duplication. Calcutta - or any other city - could not afford to provide expensive post-graduate facilities in any number of competing institutions. Then there was the question of control - educational and financial. Either Government or the University must exercise control - if Government was to control it must accept direct financial responsibility and even then be involved in perpetual conflicts with the University as to suitable standards of efficiency, rates of remuneration, fees and the like.

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1. Ronaldshay to Government of India, 8 June 1917. GI-Edn., A51-56. July 1917.

2. Ronaldshay to Government of India, 14 June 1917. Ibid.

It was, Anderson thought, very fortunate that the University had decided to take upon itself direct financial responsibility, for a portion of post-graduate work at any rate.<sup>1</sup> So far, as Asutosh had reported, Government had made yearly recurring grants of Rs.36,000 for three professorships, of Rs.12,000 for the Palit Laboratory's running, and of Rs.15,000 for university lectureships. The University had been supplementing these grants by an annual addition of about Rs.96,000 from its Fee Fund and Rs.95,000 from the Palit and Ghosh Funds, while Rs.1,00,000 came from the post-graduate students as fees per year.<sup>2</sup> In earnest of its intention to assume financial responsibility it had increased examination fees for the Matriculation, Intermediate, B.A. and B.Sc. examinations to raise an additional Rs.1,11,000 annually.

To those, like Sharp, who argued for co-operation between the colleges for post-graduate teaching, Anderson put the question how could a lot of jarring and competitive institutions be forced to co-operate unless there was some controlling authority? Who was to decide the vexed questions of the appointments of lecturers, or the allocation of work between colleges, when fees differed in almost every case? Though it was reasonable to force students to attend lectures at a cosmopolitan university, it was not so to force them to go to a denominational college such as the Scottish Churches College, or a government college, such as the Presidency. So loose a form of voluntary co-operation, under which each college would specialise in a few subjects and supplement its deficiencies with help from other colleges, was not a real improvement upon the affiliated system, particularly when the Bengal government believed that co-operation between government and non-government institutions was out of the question. Anderson did not agree either with the view that the Committee's proposals would result in the "mutilation of colleges". Under the existing system the colleges were

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1. Anderson, 19 June 1917. GI-Edn., A51-56, July 1917.

2. Speech by Asutosh - 31 Mar 1917. Senate Debates - Calcutta University Minutes, Part I, 1917.

being frozen out rapidly and their standards degraded by those of the University. Under the proposed system, the University would employ a large number of college teachers for the sake of economy and so long as academic control remained with the teachers and not with the laymen, there was always a good chance of success.<sup>1</sup>

To Anderson, Sharp replied on 22 June by stressing the weight of disinterested opinion against the measure, or at least for deferment, both in the Senate, and in such newspapers as the Statesman and Bengalee. The Presidency and Scottish Churches Colleges were now well equipped and excellently staffed, while student numbers were kept down to what could reasonably be taught and placed on a tutorial basis. Anderson's assumption that they were being frozen out was not in fact true.

E.D. Maclagan, the Education Secretary, was less positive. The Government could hardly take exception to the proposals on their merit. The Committee had been appointed by the Government, with high government officials and eminent educationists as members and it had submitted a unanimous report, the present system of post-graduate teaching under the University had been in force for some time so that it would be impossible to break it up entirely.<sup>2</sup> The Committee's proposals had been approved by the two Bengal Governors, Carmichael and Ronaldshay, its principles had been accepted by the majority of the Bengal Government and the regulations based upon it had been passed by a majority of the Senate.<sup>3</sup> Still he urged the Government of India to postpone sanctioning it in view of the proposed commission which had yet to start functioning though he admitted this might mean postponement for three or five or more years.<sup>4</sup>

The Education Member, Sankaran Nair, could not agree to postponement, whether on grounds of principle or of practical policy. If the report of

1. Anderson, Note, 19 June 1917. GI-Edn., A51-56, July 1917.

2. Maclagan, Note 24 June 1917. GI-Edn., A51-56, July 1917.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

the Committee was not approved then the Patna University Bill would run into certain obstruction in the Imperial Legislative Council. What is more that Bill represented the application of the principle of concentration of higher studies at a centre, carried to a degree greater even than that advocated by the London University Commission. To reject that principle in relation to Calcutta would not seem very logical and the issue should certainly be considered by the University Commission, he therefore proposed acceptance of the report and consequent regulations. The Viceroy agreed with him.<sup>1</sup>

By approving the Committee's report and sanctioning the regulations which followed it, the Government of India had set the final seal of legitimacy on the whole organisation of higher studies under Calcutta University's direct control. It was a tremendous personal triumph for Asutosh, the architect of this development, accomplished in the face of determined opposition from the Department of Education of the Government of India and from much of the establishment in Bengal, and despite grave financial difficulties and occasional though severe public criticism, due mainly to the scandals that latterly had surrounded Asutosh's activities in the University. It was a hard struggle all the way, made only a little lighter by consistent personal support from Lord Carmichael and later from Sir Sankaran Nair, the Education Member of the Government of India. It also marked the destruction of the main strand of Lord Curzon's educational policy - that of preventing Indians from taking the educational structure at the highest level under their own control.

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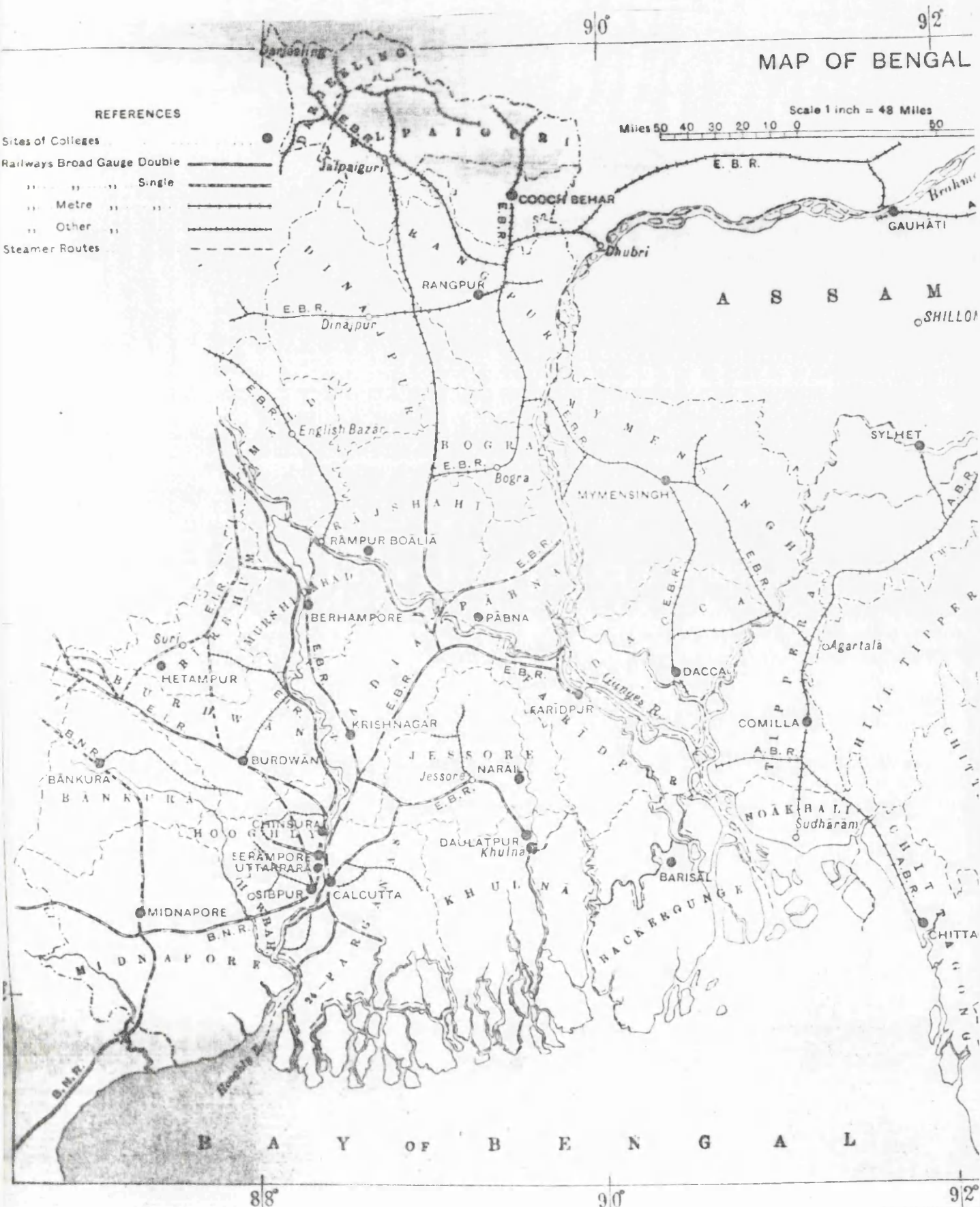
1. Sankaran Nair, Note, 25 June 1917. GI-Edn., A41-45, Jan 1917.

# MAP OF BENGAL

## REFERENCES

- Sites of Colleges
- Railways Broad Gauge Double
- Single
- Metre
- Other
- Steamer Routes

Scale 1 inch = 48 Miles  
Miles 50 40 30 20 10 0 50



## CHAPTER II

The Post-Graduate Committee set up in 1916 by the Government of India had had a limited aim and purpose - to bring the chaotic development of post-graduate instruction at Calcutta University into some sort of order and within the existing financial resources of the University. Government also hoped that as a result it would be possible to reserve to itself some authority over post-graduate policy. It had with much reluctance accepted Sir Asutosh Mookerjee as a member of the Committee, but even when the Committee's <sup>report</sup> failed to answer Government expectations it had still allowed the Senate to debate it, comforted by the fact that the Committee's work was only prefatory to that of a much larger Commission which later could put all to rights. It was so that it might do so that Government pressed for the early appointment and gave very wide terms of reference to the Commission, covering the whole spectrum of secondary, intermediate, degree and post-graduate instruction and research. The Calcutta University Commission 1917-19, often known as the Sadler Commission after its chairman, was appointed in September 1917 and reported late in 1919.

Sir Michael Sadler, an eminent British educationist and Vice-Chancellor of Leeds University, was chosen as the President of the Commission.<sup>1</sup> Other members were Ramsay Muir, Professor of Modern History, Manchester University, J.W. Gregory, Professor of Geology, Glasgow University, P.J. Hartog, Academic Registrar of London University and later the first Vice-Chancellor of Dacca University, Asutosh Mookerjee, Ziauddin Ahmad, Professor of Mathematics, Aligarh College, W.W. Hornell, the Director of Public Instruction, Bengal and George Anderson, Assistant Secretary, Department of Education, Government of India. It was in recognition of Asutosh's influence in the University that Lord Chelmsford readily included the former Vice-Chancellor in the Commission.<sup>2</sup> The Government knew that Asutosh could

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1. Fifteen years earlier (in 1902) Curzon had wanted to secure his services as the first Director-General of Education in India.

2. "Granted all Asutosh's misdeeds, what we want is a report which will be accepted", Chelmsford to Ronaldshay, 14 July 1917. Chelmsford Collection, Eur.E.264/19.

wreck the Commission if he wanted to - he would certainly do so if he was left out. To Chelmsford it was inconceivable that a strong body of educational experts, presided over by a man of Sadler's standing was likely to be persuaded by Asutosh into making an educationally unsound report.<sup>1</sup>

The Commission, announced on 14 September 1917, was to "enquire into the condition and prospects of the University of Calcutta and to consider the question of a constructive policy in relation to the problems it presents "; and to make recommendations "upon the present requirements of university instruction and organisation ".<sup>2</sup> The Commission's report, published two years later in 1919, was the outcome of the most exhaustive enquiry of its kind ever undertaken in India during the British period. The Commission in its voluminous report,<sup>3</sup> testified to the widespread desire for higher education in Bengal, found the system unsatisfactory, and proposed far-reaching and expensive remedies. Taking a comparative view of the United Kingdom and Bengal, which had comparable

1. Chelmsford Collection, Eur.E.264/19. Devaprasad Sarbadhikary, the then Vice-Chancellor, resigned in protest against his exclusion but was persuaded by Ronaldshay to withdraw his resignation. Ronaldshay to Chelmsford, 25 Sept 1917.

2. Resolution of the Government of India - 14 Oct 1917 - Calcutta University Commission (Sadler) Report, I, 1. The full terms of reference to the Commission were : to enquire into the working of the present organisation of the University of Calcutta and its affiliated colleges, the standards, the examinations and the distribution of teachers; to consider at what places and in what manner provision should be made in Bengal for teaching and research for persons above the secondary school age; to examine the suitability of the situation and constitution of the University and make such suggestions as may be necessary for their modification; to make recommendations on the qualifications to be demanded of students on their admission to the University, as to the value to be attached outside the University to the degrees conferred by it and as to the relations which should exist between the University and its colleges or departments and between the University and the Governments; and to recommend any changes of constitution, administration and educational policy which may appear desirable.

3. The text of the report was in five volumes. The appendices to the report covered eight volumes more.



populations - about 45,000,000, and almost equal numbers of university students - around 26,000, they found two major differences between them. One lay in the proportion of the students taking a purely literary degree. At Calcutta University 22,000, "an unduly large proportion of the able young men of Bengal ", were being trained in a manner too purely literary.<sup>1</sup> The other was that Bengal had just one, swollen university while the United Kingdom had eighteen.

The sheer size of the student body overwhelmed the Commission<sup>2</sup> but what astonished them even more than the sheer numbers of university students was that, by contrast with western experience, it was not the growth of industry, trade or commerce which had called them into existence. They traced the growth largely "to social usages and traditions which are peculiar to India and specially strong in Bengal ".<sup>3</sup> Unrelated to economic demand, this growing output of higher education would, the Commission feared, lead to a "steady increase of a sort of intellectual proletariat not without reasonable grievances...."<sup>4</sup> Although they could find no public concern at that point of time, they were convinced that "a system which leads to such results must in the end lead to the intellectual impoverishment of the country"<sup>5</sup>.

Examining the system of higher education the Commission found that "an effective synthesis between college and university was still undiscovered" and that the "foundation of a sound university organisation had not yet been laid ".<sup>6</sup> The University's control over the colleges was as rigid as it was ineffective; while the University failed to secure efficient teaching, it had at the same time suppressed all independence or freedom of choice

1. Sadler Report - I, 20-21.

2. Ibid., I,21.

3. Ibid., I,24.

4. Ibid., I,23.

5. Ibid., I,22-23.

6. Ibid., I,77.

in the subjects and methods of teaching. Of the governing bodies of the University, the Senate was not properly representative either of the colleges, of the learned professions, or of commercial, industrial and agricultural interests. But the most seriously under-represented of all groups was the Muslim community - in 1918 there were twelve Muslims in the Senate out of a total of 119 Fellows.<sup>1</sup> The Syndicate, on which the Muslims had for years been unrepresented,<sup>2</sup> was even more defective. Though the amount and variety of work which fell upon it was so extensive as to be unmanageable it lacked both the proper authority to do the work and the machinery to do it properly. There was no clear differentiation between the purely academic and administrative functions of the University.

Clearly, the Commission felt, there was an overwhelming case for reform and reconstruction. They proposed to set up, in place of the Senate, a very large and representative body, to be known as the Court, consisting of not less than four hundred members, in part ex-officio (not less than 150), in part elected, the nominated element being reduced to a subordinate proportion. A majority of the members would be university teachers - members of the Academic Council, Deans of Faculties, all Professors and Readers, Principals of Degree Colleges, Registered Muslim Graduates - the numbers in all these categories to be decided by statutes. It would perform the functions of representing public opinion in Bengal, and the various interests in a way which had never been possible before. The Court's assent would be required for fundamental legislative proposals but not for the details of regulations - in short it would exercise a general supervision over the progress and work of the University, including finance. The Commission recognised that because of the numbers involved its meeting would be infrequent - two or three times a year at the most - hence it should elect a small standing committee of reference consisting

1. University Calendar, 1918.

2. Its first Muslim Member was elected in 1920-1921 by the Faculty of Arts - he was Dr. Abdullah Al-Mamun Suhrawardy.

of the Vice-Chancellor and Treasurer ex-officio and twenty-eight other members of the Court - at least one eighth should be Muslim.<sup>1</sup>

In place of the Syndicate, they proposed to set up a small body called the Executive Council which would co-ordinate the work of the various sections of the university. It was to be given considerable legislative, administrative and financial powers, with a higher degree of independence and executive authority than was possessed by the Syndicate, but it was usually not to be concerned with the details of purely academic business. This was entrusted to the charge of the Academic Council which was to consist of teachers of the University and the constituent colleges.<sup>2</sup>

Finally the Commission proposed changes in the office of Vice-Chancellor. They suggested that he should be appointed for a term of not less than five years. As "chief executive officer of the University", and chairman, ex-officio, of the Academic Council, and hence at the apex of the administrative and academic structures, and as representative of the University in its relationships with outside bodies, the Vice-Chancellor must be "a man of high academic standing, distinguished record and ripe experience". And given the complexity and range of his duties he should be a full-time and a salaried officer, with pay, allowances and status equal to that of a High Court Judge.<sup>3</sup>

The Commission examined in great detail the controversial question of relations between the University and the Government. These relations were more intimate and more complex than was the case in most other countries just because, from the very beginning, the Government had retained in its own hands a very large measure of ultimate guidance and control over all the universities, so that the direction in which they moved had been in a great degree due to the policy and acts of government.<sup>4</sup>

1. Sadler Report - IV, 374-421.

2. Ibid., 377.

3. Ibid., 382 - 83.

4. Ibid., III, 223-224.

This was because the Indian universities had always been in fact departments of state, organised with a view to the performance of certain state functions. They were to control and regulate on behalf of Government, the colleges and schools - some created and maintained and many more aided by the State - within their jurisdiction. The State, said the Commission, could not be expected to allow the regulation of these institutions to pass entirely out of its hands; it might delegate this to the Universities organised for this purpose - which it did - but it exercised the ultimate control because it retained ultimate responsibility. Moreover, the Universities conducted the examinations which formed the qualifications for admission to state service - the State could not be indifferent to the qualifications of its servants. In short, so long as the Universities continued to be primarily administrative bodies rather than corporations of learning, they must continue, to a greater or less extent, to be controlled by the State.<sup>1</sup>

As the State supplied more than a third of the total expenditure on higher education, this power of the purse formed quite naturally another important element in the State's ability to exercise a degree of control over the Universities. The colleges formed the base of the Universities and the Government by virtue of its power to approve the conditions for affiliation and to decide all applications for affiliation could determine the character and equipment of the colleges which prepared students for various university examinations. Then again, the State, through its "model" collegiate institutions, defined the staff and equipment and provided the teachers, thereby setting a tone and standard, which was followed, as it was intended to be, to a certain extent by the rest. The system of grants-in-aid, by means of the conditions attached to a grant, also guaranteed a certain degree of state control over the methods of the aided colleges. But, said the Commission, even in the existing type of University it was doubtful "whether

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1. Total expenditure on university education in Bengal, colleges included, in 1916-1917 was Rs.38,06,456 to which central and provincial governments contributed Rs.14,73,711 or 39%; fees contributed 52.8 per cent and endowment 8.2 per cent. Sadler Report - III, 224.

a government control so minute and detailed as that imposed by the present system is likely to produce the best results".<sup>1</sup>

The Commission however noticed that a new concept, regarding the role and functions of universities largely being called into existence by state encouragement and aid, was slowly but steadily replacing the old ideas. New unitary teaching universities were planned for Dacca, Patna, Rangoon, Aligarh, Lucknow and Delhi. At the same time older ones were changing themselves to become, like the universities of other countries, organised bodies of teachers, investigators and students, which might indeed perform certain functions on behalf of the State, but for which these functions would only be peripheral to their main work of cultivating learning. It was partly because of this development that the demand for greater autonomy had become steadily more insistent. Although the Commission had no hesitation in recommending that the system of organisation of the universities must be revised so as to correspond with the new concept they were quick to point out one anomaly inherent in the situation. The teaching and unitary type of universities entailed provision of great resources - a burden which in a poverty stricken country like India only the State could bear. Therefore, the schemes of new universities, drawing mainly on state funds, "instead of promising a higher degree of autonomy, actually propose in most cases a closer and more direct government control than has hitherto been exercised in universities of the existing type".<sup>2</sup>

The Commission recommended that the ultimate control over Calcutta University should be transferred to the Government of Bengal, although the first Vice-Chancellor, no longer to be honorary, should be appointed by the Governor-General in Council for a period to be determined by him. Successive Vice-Chancellors should be appointed thereafter for terms of five years by the Bengal Governor as Chancellor upon report from the

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1. Sadler Report - III, 260. There were seven government, twelve aided, and fourteen unaided colleges.

2. Sadler Report - III, 260. For example, the Patna University Act, passed in 1917, established a close relation between university and government.

Executive Council. The Treasurer was to be appointed by the Chancellor on the nomination of the Executive Council which was given the power to appoint the Registrar. In regard to university legislation all changes in, or addition to, the Statutes of the University which might be proposed by the Court of the University should be approved by the Government of Bengal. But, departing from the Act of 1904, the Commission proposed to divide all the university legislation into two categories - Statutes dealing only with broad and fundamental questions and Ordinances dealing with details of day-to-day business. According to their recommendations the former should require government approval while the latter need not. To ensure financial stability the Government should make a fixed annual allotment to the University and also to the various colleges, attaching only such conditions to their expenditure as might be necessary for their general well-being. They should then be given freedom in making the best use of the funds, the only requirement being the annual submission of accounts for government audit. For the appointment of teaching staff, the Commission proposed the creation of selection committees consisting of persons representing the University, the colleges and the Governor as Chancellor. The final appointment should normally rest with the Executive Council which should, however, be precluded from appointing any person not recommended by a duly appointed selection committee.<sup>1</sup>

The most radical and controversial recommendations of the Commission dealt with the reorganisation of the collegiate structure in Bengal. The intermediate stage of education, which currently formed the first two years of university instruction, they proposed to transfer from the colleges to the schools as not truly university-level work.<sup>2</sup> It would be placed

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1. Sadler Report, V, 111 and III.

2. Sadler Report, IV, 93.

under an autonomous Board of Secondary and Intermediate Education.<sup>1</sup>

Of the mufasssal colleges some would be affiliated to the University but administered, as regards their courses and examinations, by a new Mufasssal Board, while a few with university potential would be granted an increasing academic autonomy. These "University Colleges" would be named by Statute, and should be more generously funded.<sup>2</sup> The Calcutta colleges the Commission proposed to divide into two categories. One, the Incorporated Colleges, wholly financed by the University and managed for it by committee, was to provide specialist teaching - for example, the Law College, the Science College, or the Sanskrit College which might, if handed over by Government, be developed as a centre of oriental learning.<sup>3</sup> The second, the Constituent Colleges, would consist of those which satisfied university conditions as to the number of degree students, the number, pay and tenure conditions of their teachers and the adequacy of residential arrangements.<sup>4</sup> They would fully participate in the co-operative teaching of the University and their teachers would be members of all university academic bodies. Their students might attend university lectures without payment of further fees. (A third group would exist for not more than five years in which colleges of potential constituent status would be on probation, allowed to make good deficiencies in their staff, equipment and so on, if they could.)<sup>5</sup> Women's colleges which fulfilled the conditions laid down by the University would enjoy the status of Constituent Colleges, but their courses of study and examinations would be under the direct control of a special Board of Women's Education.<sup>6</sup>

The Commission did not recommend, as the opponents of the University

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1. Sadler Report, IV, 37-52.

2. Ibid., 347-49.

3. Ibid., 406.

4. Ibid., 408-07.

5. Ibid., 407.

6. Ibid., 407 and 413-15.

had hoped, the abolition or contraction of the Post-Graduate Department. Indeed the Commission recommended the creation in the University as a whole of as many as twenty-seven new departments of studies if funds permitted - there could be chairs, they suggested, for subjects like Indian Philosophy and Religion, Vedic Language, Literature and Culture and Indian Anthropology.

What they did propose however, was "a new synthesis between the University and its colleges, wherein the University will not be something outside of and apart from the colleges, as it now is, but the colleges will be in the fullest sense members of, and partners in, the University. .... It must be a system wherein the colleges, while stronger and freer than they now are, ... will neither be tempted to rival the University or claim independence of it, nor have reason to feel any jealousy or fear of it, or to regard it as a competitor."<sup>1</sup> Presidency College was to play its part as the best equipped centre in the University, but its resources were to be made available to the University as a whole. A Governing Body, appointed by the Government with representatives of the University and the college teachers included in it, was to manage the College. The College should also have at least ten chairs, to be known as Presidency chairs, specially reserved for men, Indian or English, trained in the West, the salaries attached to these posts being on a scale adequate to attract the best possible candidates. This, the Commission believed, would enable the College to keep up that tradition of intellectual contribution to Bengali society made possible by the fact that many of its chief teachers were trained in the West. These posts, to be filled in England, should be paid out of the revenues of the College.<sup>2</sup>

Fully aware of the magnitude and complexity of these proposed changes, the Commission recommended the immediate creation of an Executive Commission by the Act reconstituting the University itself. This Commission, small

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1. Sadler Report, IV, 254.

2. Ibid., 323.



but powerful, would guide the University through this difficult period of transition. It was to consist of seven or at the most nine members, to be appointed by the Governor-General in Council. It should include the Vice-Chancellor, the Treasurer, one or two representatives of the Government of Bengal, one representative from industry and commerce and one representative each from the two major communities of Bengal.<sup>1</sup>

The Commission, under their terms of reference, also studied the Dacca University scheme, and on the issue of relations with Government made almost the same recommendations as they had in regard to Calcutta. But as the proposed University at Dacca was intended for a smaller number of students they proposed a much simpler organisational framework, modifying the Dacca University scheme prepared by the Robert Nathan committee of 1912 accordingly. That committee had recommended what practically amounted to a state institution - almost a special branch of the administration. The Commission combated this view and instead recommended an almost autonomous University, making it responsible for its internal administration, finance and all formal teaching.<sup>2</sup>

The Commission's recommendations, in their breadth of vision as well as in their attention to details, presented an admirable blueprint for a complete reconstruction and regeneration of the system of education above the primary level. They were asked to do a job and they did it with a sincerity of purpose and devotion never experienced before - and seldom since in India. They travelled widely all over Bengal and beyond, visited each and every college and scores of schools in the province and interviewed and received written evidence and memoranda from a huge number of people interested in or concerned with education. And they emphasised the paramount necessity of provision of adequate funds for the package of reforms - funds which were absolutely essential for the regeneration of the moribund system of education in Bengal. What they saw appalled

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1. Sadler Report, IV, 419, 21.

2. Biss to G.B, 9 July 1919 in GI-Edn., A16-26. Oct 1919. Biss justified this excessive amount of state control on the ground of the weakness of public opinion in regard to discipline and standards and the existence in the country of local variations and conflicting interests.

them, what they proposed marked them out as visionaries. The fact that they failed to get their recommendations translated into reality was a reflection on the political, financial and administrative bankruptcy of the province in particular and the country in general.

The Government of India, the Bengal Government and the Bengalis<sup>1</sup> were none of them prepared to accept the report in its entirety. By and large the Bengalis, who constituted the dominant group in the University, were immensely proud of the work that it was doing, particularly in the post-graduate department and in the field of higher education. Calcutta might have lost its position as the capital of India, but given proper encouragement, it could develop, they were told, into the intellectual and cultural capital of India with the University as its nucleus. It was pleasant to hear from no less a person than Lord Ronaldshay, the Governor of Bengal, that their University was trying to grow into "a national university in the best and truest meaning of the word".<sup>2</sup> They were proud, too, of Asutosh who was carving out for their University "the premier place among the universities of India with a reputation which extends beyond the seas".<sup>3</sup> The Commission's recommendations were meant to transform the whole administrative structure of the University.<sup>4</sup> That would upset the vested interests of Bengalis in the University which they were naturally not prepared to

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1. The term 'Bengalis' used in the context of Calcutta University during our period refers to the educated middle class Hindus. The relation of Bengali Muslims with the University and their attitudes towards it were quite different from those of the Hindus - a point which will be discussed later.

2. Convocation Address, 24 March 1921. In his convocation address next year on 18 March, 1922, Ronaldshay elaborated his idea of a "national university". Referring to the post-graduate department as the "greatest landmark in the history of the university in recent years" the Chancellor stated ".... I gave the scheme my wholehearted support, because it seemed to me that it was calculated to establish in Calcutta, under the auspices of the University, a real centre of learning and research, and to do much by resuscitating interest in the ancient culture of the country to stimulate thought on lines congenial to the particular genius of the Indo-Aryan race. I had in mind famous Indian universities of a past age, such for example as Nalanda."

3. The Indian Daily News - 27 Mar 1923.

4. As in the appointment of a paid Vice-Chancellor.

accept without question.

The Commission had also proposed measures to strengthen Muslim representation on all the main University bodies - "to safeguard the Muslim position all along the line". And as guardian of the community's interest they had urged the establishment of a Muslim Advisory Board "to advise the University on matters affecting the interests and convictions of Muslim students."<sup>1</sup> Anything that would or would seem to disturb or jeopardise their position of pre-eminence was bound to be looked upon <sup>by the Hindus</sup> with suspicion. However, given the favourable climate of public opinion <sub>4</sub> in support of the report and the fact that their leader had been a signatory to it they were shrewd enough to keep their reservations private, at least for the time being.

The Government of India in the Department of Education had their reservations too, mainly on two counts, the cost of the scheme and the proposed synthesis between the University and the Calcutta colleges. The Commission estimated the total recurring additional expenditure for the University scheme at Rs.65,16,200 plus another three lakhs compensation to the University for its loss of Matriculation examination fees to the new Board of Secondary and Intermediate Education. This was a "staggering and wholly disproportionate expenditure" which the Government did not think it could fairly be asked to pay - other provinces also had claims on central Government funds.<sup>2</sup> Secondly, the success of the synthesis between the colleges and the University, the core of the whole scheme, presupposed the fulfilment of conditions which the Government believed were unlikely to materialise - a spirit of goodwill and co-operation, a body of teachers imbued with the right attitudes, and the concession to such a body of freedom of teaching. It also required the existence of a good system

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1. They proposed to entrench in the University constitution minimum Muslim representation on the Court, the Executive Council, the Academic Council, on the boards of Mufassal Colleges and Women's Education and on the Board of Student Welfare. Sadler Report, V, 214-5.

2. Anderson and De la Fosse, Note, 5 Sept.1919. GI-Edn., A52-53. Oct 1919.

of intermediate and secondary education, the building up of which would be slow and costly. The Department also thought that the machinery for dealing with the non-government colleges was beyond repair and that the instrument designed for guiding the whole system towards the goal would prove inadequate. The only way to deal effectively with Calcutta University, the Department felt, was to break it up by developing new centres of university teaching in the mufassal instead of giving a new lease of life to the temporarily affiliated colleges which were nothing more than "cram shops".<sup>1</sup> But in view of the Government's inability to contemplate an increased financial contribution to Bengal's educational needs this could only be a pious wish. At the same time having appointed the Commission in the first place, the Government of India felt that they could hardly reject or substantially change the Commission's proposals. Under the circumstances, as a face-saving formula, they suggested certain modifications mainly dealing with the temporarily affiliated colleges and informed Calcutta University of their intention to legislate at an early date.<sup>2</sup>

As for the Government of Bengal, though they might quibble about the composition of the re-constituted Senate, their real concern, too, was with finance. They welcomed the proposed transfer of Calcutta University to their control - but only if the centre was prepared to find the funds for it in its new form.

The Government of India's legislative plans ran immediately into difficulties. In the first place, Calcutta University protested against the proposed introduction of the Dacca University Bill in the Imperial Legislative Council in the autumn of 1919 on the ground that the Dacca University Bill should form part of the larger plan of reconstruction for the whole of Bengal, including Calcutta University and secondary education.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Anderson and De la Fosse, Note, 5 Sept. 1919. GI-Edn., A52-53. Oct 1919.

2. Unpublished Draft Bill, July 1920. Hartog Collection, Eur.E.221.

3. Registrar to GI. 3 Sept 1919. GI-Edn., A73-77, Sept 1919.

The Commission's proposals, the University maintained, constituted one entire scheme "every element of which vitally affects the existing University."<sup>1</sup> The letter from the University to the Government of India further explained "An educational reform of the scope and character in the report imperatively requires for its success the full confidence and co-operation of the community, without which legislative measures and executive orders will be of little avail."<sup>2</sup> In the Senate debate on 23 August 1919 on this issue of legislation, J.R. Banerjee, Vice-Principal of Vidyasagar College in Calcutta and a member of the Senate, claimed, on behalf of the University, the right to be consulted and given proper consideration: "we are the custodians of the people's right so far as educational questions are concerned."<sup>3</sup> Secondly, the University asked for postponement of any legislation for six months as they needed more time to consider the report thoroughly.<sup>4</sup> Acceding to this request the Government issued a long resolution on 22 January, 1920 indicating what the Government had in mind, "the only important departure being the proposal to deal a little more rapidly and drastically with the temporarily affiliated colleges, which, it has to be generally agreed, will stultify the whole system of the teaching University if they have any great length of life."<sup>5</sup> This was a substantial deviation from the Commission's proposals which, as we shall see later, proved to be the stumbling block in the way of getting any legislation on the statute Book. The Sadler Commission had recommended that those Calcutta colleges which failed to satisfy the conditions essential for participation in the teaching organisation of the University should be allowed to exist as institutions teaching up to degree level only on a

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1. Registrar to GI. 3 Sept 1919. GI-Edn., A73-77, Sept 1919.

2. GI-Edn., A73-77, Sept. 1919.

3. Senate Debates, quoted in GI-Edn., A73-77, Sept 1919.

4. University to GI, 22 Nov 1919 in GI-Edn., A93-102, Jan 1920.

5. H. Sharp to P.J. Hartog - 16 Feb 1920. Hartog Collection - Eur.E,221.

temporary affiliation for five years, with a possible extension. The Government Resolution, on the contrary, held that these colleges should at an early date be reduced to intermediate institutions definitely separated from the University and placed under the Board of Secondary and Intermediate Education. Similarly whereas the Commission had said that the mufassal colleges which were unfit to grow into universities should gradually turn themselves into Intermediate Institutions, the Resolution proposed that such institutions should from the beginning rid themselves of intermediate students. The Government also expressed their intention to publish a Bill at the end of April 1920 and introduce it in the Imperial Legislative Council to give effect to the main recommendations of the Commission dealing with the reconstitution of the University. However they left the expensive administrative matters, including the reorganisation of intermediate and secondary education, to be dealt with by the Government of Bengal.

The University protested strongly against the Government Resolution. The Senate's letter of 30 March 1920 to the Government of India criticised the Resolution for its departure from the recommendations of the Sadler Report but even more for its lack of financial provision for the intended reforms.<sup>1</sup> The letter argued that it would be a grave error to launch a scheme of such complexity and magnitude without adequate financial guarantees. The realisation of such a package of reforms "should not be made dependant, from year to year, upon the chance goodwill of an individual or of a government". Besides, should not the whole problem of reconstruction be solved by one government—that to be inaugurated in Bengal next year? Would the new Education Minister of Bengal be in a position to finance the scheme "manufactured in advance for his benefit by the Government of India?"<sup>2</sup> These were awkward questions to which the Government of India offered no real answers.

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1. GI-Edn., A17-82, April 1922.

2. Ibid., The new Government of Bengal and new Education Minister would be those to be newly elected under the Government of India Act, which had received the royal assent on 23 December 1919.

The Government, instead, busied itself with preparing a draft Bill to be ready for publication, the Secretary of State approving, by the end of April 1920. The Bill, based on the proposals set out in the Government's January Resolution, provided for "the gradual realisation of the recommendations of the Calcutta University Commission", so that different parts could be brought into force at different dates<sup>1</sup> It was proposed that temporarily affiliated colleges, instead of being permitted continual existence for a period of five years as contemplated by the Sadler Commission, should be reduced at an early date to intermediate institutions definitely separated from the University and placed under the Board of Secondary and Intermediate Education. Similarly colleges should rid themselves of their intermediate students from the commencement of the reforms. By contrast the building up of the intermediate colleges, stronger staffs, better libraries and equipment, a wider, less literary range of courses, and improved housing for their students, all expensive undertakings, were to come at some later date.

Meanwhile a University Committee appointed by the Senate to consider the Sadler Report had submitted its own report which rejected many of the most important reforms proposed by the Commission. For example, the proposal to make the post of Vice-Chancellor a whole-time, salaried appointment did not find any favour with the Committee. Similarly it rejected the idea of creating statutory Selection Boards in England and in India to make appointments to University professorships and readerships. More important it demanded a much larger power for the existing Senate and Syndicate in the reconstruction of the University than was contemplated by the Sadler Commission. Further, it demanded that the organisation and control of the intermediate classes should remain with the University and it opposed the total separation of intermediate from degree colleges. The Committee made it quite clear

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1. Hartog Collection - Eur.E.221/1. (Statements and Objects).

that it was necessary to provide for the needs of students in Calcutta before the temporarily affiliated colleges were abolished altogether. And in obvious reference to the jurisdiction of the proposed Dacca University the Committee observed "no University holding out preferential treatment to a favoured community either in respect of the special courses taught or in respect of the accommodation provided, should be allowed to oust a non-discriminating University from any area or region peopled by diverse communities. Such communal preferences joined with such territorial exclusion would constitute a wrong against the non-favoured communities."<sup>1</sup> Finally, it rejected the idea of piece-meal legislation. In a separate letter to Government the University asked for postponement of the Bill.

The Government of Bengal, on being approached by the Government of India for its opinion, agreed to the publication of the Bill and to its introduction thereafter, in September, in the central legislature. But the Provincial Government expressed its inability to finance the reforms embodied in the Bill and pressed for a declaration from the Central Government that it would give a subsidy to Bengal. Without some such declaration, Bengal pointed out, the University's criticisms of 30 March would seem justified and the Central Government would lay themselves open to the charge that "after appointing a Commission and speaking with approval of its recommendations, they had contented themselves with passing an Act and washing their hands of the problem of finance well knowing that the Government of Bengal are not in a position to make any use of the legislative measure".<sup>2</sup> But in case the Central Government could not make a grant for the purpose then the Bill should be so drafted as to permit the secondary and intermediate reorganisation to be brought into force immediately and the rest left for a time.

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1. Report of the Committee appointed by the Senate - March and May 1920. The members of the Committee were : Nilratan Sircar, Herambachandra Maitra, Brajendranath Seal, J.N.Dasgupta, Charuchandra Biswas, A.Suhrawardy, W.S.Urquhart.

2. GI-Edn., A17-82. April 1922.



Public opinion in Bengal also was becoming less favourable to the Sadler Report. The University Committee had at every point denounced any outside control of the University: the functions of the Visitor should be limited, the ex-officio element on the Court should be reduced and the Court's powers of initiative enlarged, there should be no Selection Boards for University staff. They even pressed that no minimum salary should be laid down for professors and readers. The Indian Association, organ of the Moderates or Liberals, in its letter to the Bengal Government, expressed a hostility to the Report which was scarcely less wholesale. If it accepted transfer of secondary education from the Department of Public Instruction to a Board they demanded that it should be dominated by non-officials and placed under the Indian Minister in charge of education. It also attacked any idea of communal representation on University bodies and opposed the use of special Selection Boards. Their attitude was summed up in the sentence "The University should be a self-governing body and its decisions ought not to await the sanction of any higher authority." The Bengal Landholders Association was less hostile, but it, too, pressed for a strong non-official element in Court and Executive Council and opposed the notion of a Muslim Advisory Board. It requested that publication should be delayed.

The most serious opposition developed, however, in Britain. Sir Sankaran Nair, now a member of the Council of India, in a note on the Government's Resolution, particularly criticised the proposal regarding the temporarily affiliated colleges. That policy, he noted, was the same as that which had elicited such "fierce protest" when it was proposed by the University Commission in Curzon's day. It was politically inexpedient, but it was also educationally wrong. Government ought not to insist upon a provision which would reduce educational facilities by closing colleges unless it was prepared to replace those institutions by establishing colleges of its own."<sup>1</sup> This note provoked an unanticipated response from

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1. Nair, Note, 27 Jan 1920. GI-Edn., A17-82, April 1922.

a much more powerful quarter. The Secretary of State, after seeing Nair's note, refused to sanction the publication of the Government of India's draft Bill.

This threw the plans of the Government into disarray, and documents and telegrams went back and forth between the India Office and the Government of India, which in pressing for publication had the support of the Bengal Government.<sup>1</sup> Sharp commented that "Sadler and his English colleagues had quite under-estimated the obstructive powers of vested interests in Calcutta and the capacity for procrastination which characterises the present University." It was for this reason that it was essential not to allow temporary affiliations which might end by acquiring permanency.<sup>2</sup> The Government of India therefore pressed Montagu again on 18 May, stressing the "serious embarrassment caused by the postponement order coming at the eleventh hour", and though Montagu replied doubting the wisdom of departing from the Commission's recommendations regarding the temporarily affiliated colleges, India pressed again on 1 June for sanction to publish.<sup>3</sup> Meanwhile they prepared a Resolution to explain the provisions of the draft Bill which dealt sympathetically with the Senate's objections.<sup>4</sup> On 25 June Montagu revealed what probably was his main concern, asking whether it was not impolitic to publish such a controversial Bill on the eve of the Reforms and impolitic too to drive it through with the help of the official bloc. Better, then, to leave the Bill to the new reformed Councils.<sup>5</sup> Shafi, like Sharp, thought that there would be support for the Bill in Council - from the Muslims for example, but Chelmsford's Council generally agreed that while the Bill should be introduced it should not be pushed through by force. The most cynical expression of this

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1. Telegram GB to GI, 13 May 1920. GI-Edn., A17-82, April 1922.

2. Sharp, Note, 12 May 1920. Ibid.

3. VR to SS 18 May 1920; SS to VR, 25 May 1920, VR to SS 1 June 1920. Ibid.

4. "The Government of India are well aware that any measure dealing with university reform is very jealously scrutinised by the educated public" 8 June 1920. GI-Edn., A17-82, April 1922.

5. SS to VR 25 June 1920. Ibid.

attitude came from Hailey: "There was a time when we were justified in using force majeure to push through measures which we believed to be for the good of the country ... because India at large was content to believe in our good intentions ... I do not think that we can now take any such attitude.".... "If India likes to have a messy educational system ... India must pay the penalty. I do not see why we should imperil the stability of our administration to secure educational or social advancement....."<sup>1</sup> To telegrams sent on 28 June and 14 July Montagu however still replied with a refusal of sanction, demanding time for a fuller consideration of the draft Bill.<sup>2</sup>

At this point a copy of the Bill was sent to Ronaldshay who was asked to explain to the University why it would not now be introduced in September. The University was so informed, but without further explanation. For Montagu Sharp was instructed by Chelmsford to prepare a "strongly worded" draft despatch. Discussed and toned down in the Viceroy's Council this earned the deep disappointment of the Governments of India and of Bengal.<sup>3</sup>

A picture thus emerges from this web of correspondence of extraordinary muddle and mutual suspicion. Montagu and the India Office obviously suspected that the Government of India wanted to rush the Bill through the Imperial Legislative Council before the reformed constitution came into operation. The India Office was unwilling to leave the reorganisation completely in the hands of the Bengal Education Department which would then have been the case. In a confidential letter to Sadler, F.H. Brown at the India Office wrote "... Sharp has induced Government to take the wrong turn on the critical question of handling the colleges which fail to come up to the reasonable standards laid down in your report.

1. W.M. Hailey, Note, 27 June 1920. GI-Edn., A17-82, April 1922.

2. SS to VR 16 July 1920. Ibid.

3. VR to SS, 30 Sept 1920. Ibid. A Bengal letter of 23 Nov 1920 was to deplore the delay which "has undoubtedly prejudiced seriously the success of the reorganisation".

I gather the mistake to be the re-constitution of the University without simultaneously setting up the proposed Board of Secondary Education, and that the Bill as drafted would leave the decisions entirely in the hands of the Education Department." <sup>1</sup> Sadler's reply, which strongly influenced the Secretary of State, could hardly have been more emphatic. The Commission, said Sadler, had been "animated by the desire to secure vitally necessary improvements in the educational system of Bengal and not to curtail opportunities already offered ". The University should be free as far as possible "to develop in response to Indian ideas" and any statutory restrictions designed to keep it in leading strings would be inadvisable.<sup>2</sup> On the question of provision of adequate funds for the reforms Sadler was equally outspoken. If changes were proposed without any promise of increased funds "they will wear the appearance of being intended to curtail educational opportunity instead of making university education at once better and more accessible ".<sup>3</sup>

But it was the Government of India and particularly the Department of Education which proved the most distrustful - distrustful of Montagu, of the India Office, of the University, the reformed Legislature and the public opinion of Bengal alike. The stand taken by the India Office was nothing but "a clever but rather disingenuous attempt to excuse action on the part of the India Office of which the majority of the India Council are rather ashamed ". Montagu had ignored the considered views of the Government of India though he had shown "studied respect for the views of Sir Michael Sadler, which cannot be regarded as authoritative on certain administrative matters, and for the views of the University ". The India Office was even suspected of communicating confidential correspondence "to certain persons in Calcutta ".<sup>4</sup> As for the University

1. Brown to Sadler, 9 Aug 1920. Hartog Collection, Eur. E.221.

2. Sadler to Sir Malcolm Seton, 12 Aug 1920. Hartog Collection Eur.E.221.

3. Sadler to F.H. Brown, 9 Aug. 1920. Ibid.

4. Sharp, Note, 25 Jan 1921. GI-Edn., A17-82, April 1922.

here was a body always to be treated with suspicion, "an intensely conservative body and ... any attempt to influence it is always resented". Sharp accused it of "unpardonable breach of faith" in the past and now of "intentional procrastination and obstinate opposition" to all Sadler's main proposals. (He was particularly resentful of Montagu for equating the Government's minor deviations from Sadler with the total rejection by the University of all the Commission's most vital proposals.)<sup>1</sup> As regards non-official public opinion "had we formulated a Bill in consonance with public opinion it would have been a perfectly futile measure. Public opinion in Bengal is one thing, the real wishes of the people in Bengal are another."<sup>2</sup>

The Government of Bengal, while strong in support of the provisions of the Bill, was anxious to avoid incurring any financial liability for future reforms of higher education. In fact it was the same motive which lay behind the ill-fated activities of the Government of India which ever since the submission of the Sadler Report had been determined not to assume any financial responsibility in connection with the reform proposals. This led it to frame the Bill in such a way, against the strong disapproval of the Commission and the advice of its own Education Department, that it could deal only with those parts of the Sadler scheme which did not involve any expenditure on its part. (The Commission had put the first year expenditure for the university scheme alone at Rs.10 lakhs.) But in June 1920, under pressure from Montagu, the Bengal Government and the University, the Government of India was persuaded in its explanatory Resolution to hold out a vague assurance that it would be ready "to consider

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1. Sharp, Note, 25 Jan 1921. GI-Edn., A17-82, April 1922.

2. Yet it was this public opinion which the India Office was anxious not to antagonise. In his note on the Bill, Dumbell, the Under Secretary of the Judicial and Public Department at the India Office wrote, "The marginal heading of Clause 4 'dissolution of the former University' would form a striking scare-headline in the Calcutta Press". Hartog Collection, Eur.E.221.

its ability to give financial aid to Bengal in order to help the scheme of reconstruction outlined in the Bill." But the Finance Department, quite characteristically, objected strongly : "As far as I am aware," W.M.H. Hailey the Finance Member noted, "there is not, and never has been, any intention on the part of the Government of India to consider this possibility, and it would not, in my opinion, be correct to hold out to the public any hopes that we shall do so."<sup>1</sup>

The draft was modified accordingly and of course the Government could now take refuge behind the new Reforms Act of 1919 which changed the structure of provincial finance.<sup>2</sup>

Montagu's opposition thus effectively put an end to the legislative plan of the Government of India for Calcutta University - otherwise described as "the reforming zeal of an unreformed bureaucrat".<sup>3</sup> Meanwhile the Government of India Act had been passed under which the Central Government lost its jurisdiction over education in the provinces. Ironically the Subjects Committee had left Calcutta University under the jurisdiction of the Central Government for a period of five years to enable the proposals of the Sadler Commission to be carried through. But now a frustrated Government of India informed Bengal of its intention to transfer the University to it. Bengal was asked to introduce a Bill in the Bengal Legislative Council transferring the University to itself - such an action

1. Hailey, Note, 12 June, 1920. GI-Edn., A17-82 April 1922.

Yet only three months after thus rejecting the possibility of aid Government is found admitting that the figures of expenditure in colleges and secondary schools were more depressing in Bengal than in any other province and unique in indicating stagnation or even retrogression since 1896.

Government took the opportunity, nevertheless, of a dig at the University, pointing out that it was in these years that a startling improvement in degree results had occurred at Calcutta. Only one explanation was possible - that standards had gone down. G.I to Montagu 30 Sept 1920, Hartog Collection, Eur. 221/1.

2. Montagu, however, felt that some pronouncement on funds was necessary although he admitted the limitations imposed by the Act of 1919. He had supported the University's proposal (rejected by Bengal) that the financial implications should be surveyed by a committee representing the Governments of India and Bengal and the University.

3. Calcutta Review - Oct 1921, 178.

was possible, subject to Section 80A(3) (f) of the 1919 Act. But this Bengal refused to do as that would imply acceptance of ultimate financial responsibility for the Sadler reforms. Bengal would not undertake legislation to effect the transfer unless assured of central funds and should the Government of India itself transfer the University then it would not legislate to introduce the Sadler reforms until their cost had been met. Government however ignored the threat and on 1 March 1921 introduced a transfer Bill "on the clear understanding that it (would) not saddle them with future responsibility in regard to developments in the University or its financial condition."<sup>1</sup> Thus in March 1921 the University at last came under the Government of Bengal.

In the previous January the first Bengal Council under the reformed system had met. It was a large representative body, 140 strong as opposed to the 53 of the old Council, and responsible to a far wider electorate of over a million as opposed to 6,000 or so before. The old pattern of representation of interest groups survived in the shape of 22 members returned by special electoral colleges, but 92 members came from general, territorial constituencies, though these were divided into Muslim, Non-Muslim, European and Anglo-Indian. Not only were elected members now vastly preponderant, but real power had been put into their hands, for the ministers in charge of transferred subjects, though appointed by the Governor, were chosen, so mass politics ensued, from those who could command support from the elected members.

Politically the first Council consisted largely of Moderates, the Extremists having boycotted the election, and socially the membership remained elitist, with landholding, the law and other professions predominant, and in the case of Hindus, high caste.<sup>2</sup> Nearly two-thirds of the Hindus and

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1. GB to GI, 16 Feb 1921; GI to GB, 18 Feb 1921. GI-Edn., A17-82, April 1922. Sharp would declare later, "the Government of Bengal have entirely turned their back upon the educational considerations involved in the Commission's report and have used the case as a peg on which to hang a general complaint regarding their financial treatment under the Reforms." Sharp, Note 26 Feb 1922. Ibid.

2. Among the Muslim members a few from northern and eastern Bengal claimed to represent "agricultural interests."

perhaps a quarter of the Muslims had university degrees. (Calcutta University had one representative, and when Dacca University came into being it too sent one Council member.) Educationally and professionally there was thus a strong element capable of taking an informed interest in University affairs - and given the cultural significance of education and its patronage potential, likely to wish to do so.<sup>1</sup> The Council was anxious to exercise its new powers, and in putting University administration, particularly its finances, into good order saw an admirable opportunity for doing so.

The first Education Minister of Bengal under dyarchy was Provash Chandra Mitter, a distinguished Calcutta lawyer, landholder and Secretary of the National Liberal League, a protégé of Sir Surendranath Banerjea, but well regarded by Government for his willingness to serve on the Rowlatt Committee in the face of public criticism.<sup>2</sup> As Minister he assumed responsibility for university affairs. Ronaldshay's acceptance of Mitter for ministerial office was readily understandable. His choice of Sir Asutosh Mookerjee as Vice-Chancellor of Calcutta University was more surprising or at least more controversial. Ronaldshay had early been aware of his ability and his power, but it was his capacity for getting things done which perhaps most commended him: "Although not perhaps everyone's cup of tea," as Ronaldshay put it, "he possessed a dynamic personality and was in my estimation the man most likely to prove capable of coping with the existing situation ...." In March 1921 Asutosh took office for a fifth term as Vice-Chancellor.<sup>3</sup>

The situation which he faced was one of financial crisis in the

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1. They were not concerned only with higher education, however. They now represented constituents few of whom had been to university and very few indeed to post-graduate institutions. How to allocate scarce funds between primary, secondary and higher education would greatly concern them.

2. Zetland, Marquess of, Essayez, 136.

3. Ibid., 146.



University, maladministration and the whole question of reorganisation opened up by the Sadler Report. The financial crisis was caused by external and internal factors. The war and wartime inflation had put up costs and wages to the University while the yield of its securities had fallen. The creation of three new universities at Patna, Dacca and Rangoon,<sup>1</sup> all carved out of Calcutta's jurisdiction, resulted in a fall in the number of fee-paying examination candidates, and this just when the non-co-operation movement had instituted the boycott of government schools and colleges.<sup>2</sup> At the same time the rapid growth of post-graduate teaching, coupled with mismanagement if not worse, had put great strain upon the University's resources. After several years of substantial surpluses the University went into the red in 1918-19 and deeply so in 1919-20 and 1920-21.<sup>3</sup> In February 1921 the University went to the Government of Bengal asking for a large grant: Rs.21,00,000 for capital expenditure and Rs.1,75,000 to pay the salaries of its post-graduate teachers.<sup>4</sup> On 15 March Bengal replied with grants of Rs.1,25,000 for capital expenditure and Rs.10,000 for extension of technological studies, and a promise to help the University escape from its financial embarrassment if realistically modest demands were put up. With this went a clear statement of the Bengal Government's inability to make any large grant or to finance the restructuring recommended by the Sadler Commission.<sup>5</sup>

These financial difficulties were taken by critics of Asutosh and

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1. In 1917, 1920 and 1921 respectively.

2. The number of college students fell by 27 per cent in 1921, while the fee fund receipts fell from Rs.11,38.00 in 1920-21 to Rs.9,58.000 in 1921-22. Calcutta Review, Oct and Nov 1922.

3. Ibid. Whereas expenditure on post-graduate courses rose from Rs.5,15,000 in 1917-18 to Rs.7,50,000 in 1920-21, post-graduate fee income fell from Rs.97,000 to Rs.89,000.

4. Ibid., Oct 1921.

5. Hundred Years, 276.

those in command of Senate and Syndicate as occasion to attack them for maladministration. In August 1921, Rishindranath Sarkar, a Calcutta lawyer and a member from Bankura, West Bengal, moved a resolution in the Legislative Council proposing an enquiry into the general working of the University, in particular its financial administration. In the two-day debate that followed charges and counter-charges of maladministration, irregularities and foolish expansion in the post-graduate department and allegations of personal malice were made.<sup>1</sup> The University, in its turn, ridiculed the members of the Council as "our self-constituted educational experts" and blamed "the peculiar composition of the Bengal Legislative Council of this session and the negation of the principles of democracy" for the hostility of some of the members.<sup>2</sup> The Education Minister opposed the Resolution because there was little time left for the University to answer all the allegations. But the motion was carried by 55 to 41 votes.<sup>3</sup> A copy of the Resolution was sent to the Senate which eight months later appointed a committee of enquiry, chaired by Asutosh. Four months later the Committee reported. It denounced the Council critics and their unsupported assertions, and defended the University's attitude. The committee member Nilratan Sircar who moved adoption of the report thus declared. "We do not presume to be financial experts, but I would have very little faith in educational or charitable institutions that restrict their activities strictly to the extent of their finances." With it, however, came a helpful report from the Accountant-General of Bengal which assessed the size of the problem and proposed means of restoring solvency.<sup>4</sup>

1. BLCF, 29 Aug 1921, 139-174.

2. The Calcutta Review, Aug 1922, 348 and Oct 1921, 177-78.

The Review had been bought by the University to act as its mouthpiece. Its editor-in-chief was Henry Stephen, Professor of English and an Asutosh man, and its secretary was Promathanath Banerjee, Asutosh's son-in-law, teacher at the Law College and a Senate member.

3. BLCF 30 Aug 1921, 175. Twenty-four Muslims voted for the Resolution, eight against!

4. Hundred Years, 285. The Committee might brush aside the Council members' criticism, but they made telling points : no post-graduate teaching in mining, metallurgy, agriculture or textile technology, but 16 teachers of Pali for 8 students and 4 teachers of Comparative Philology for 6 students; and Asutosh — President of the Post-Graduate Councils, chairman of two thirds of the Boards of Higher Studies.

In spite of repeated requests by the University, drawing Government attention to its "critical and embarrassing" financial difficulties, the Education Minister refused any increased grant to the University in his budget for 1922-23. Dacca University, which had started functioning in July 1921, received a grant of Rs.9,00,000 while Calcutta had only its annual recurring grant of Rs.1,41,000. The Minister denied any charge of partiality to Dacca and accused Calcutta University of "thoughtless expansion"<sup>1</sup>. Then he went on to define the relation between the University and the Legislative Council. In purely academic matters the Council had<sup>not</sup> and ought not to have any say, but "financial matters are matters which are specially in charge of this House and, therefore, there must not be any irritation shown by the Calcutta University when this House desires to inquire into them." The Minister asked the University "to give up its present policy of needlessly irritating the Council in matters financial .... "<sup>2</sup>

The worsening financial position of the University nevertheless forced the Government to make a supplementary budget grant of Rs.2,50,000 to the University but<sup>it</sup> attached a number of conditions, incorporating suggestions from the Accountant-General's report. The first condition was that no further expansion involving financial responsibility would be

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1. BLCP - 1 Mar 1922, 18. Speech by P.C. Mitter. The Minister said that he had budgetted for over Rs.20 lakhs for university education. Dacca University had an accumulated balance of 65 lakhs built up over the years from 1913 onwards from the grants made by the Government of India annually.

2. Ibid., 120. The refusal of the University under Asutosh to answer questions about its financial proceedings was of long standing, as has been seen. It was now the turn of the Legislative Council to denounce its policy of secrecy - Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy complained bitterly of the contemptuous way in which the enquiries of the members of this Council have been treated by the Calcutta University. The Press also joined in. The Hitavadi of 24 and 31 December urged Government to deal with the favouritism and nepotism of Asutosh and denial of any large grant to the "white elephant" post-graduate department, while the Prabashi agreed with Henry Sharp that the department had become an "imperium in imperio". BNNR, 1921.

undertaken until the finances of the University had improved. The second condition was that the actual receipts and expenditure under every fund should be submitted to the Board of Accounts, to the Senate and the Government every month. The University was also required to pay immediately<sup>1</sup> all arrears of salaries and at least half the examiner's remuneration outstanding, amounting to Rs.175,000.

The Senate responded on 9 September 1922 by appointing a committee consisting of Asutosh, Nilratan Sircar, G.C. Bose, P.C. Roy, Father F.X. Crohan, Rev. G. Howells, Bidhanchandra Roy, Kaminikumar Chandra, formerly Member of the Imperial Legislative Council, and Jatindranath Maitra, Member, Bengal Legislative Council, to report on the conditional grant. Their unanimous report rejected the conditions as "not merely undesirable but also impracticable,"<sup>2</sup> and drew a sharp contrast to the freedom and autonomy of universities upheld by the British Education Minister Herbert Fisher. The Report of the Committee was discussed by the Senate at a full meeting on 2 December 1922. Khagendranath Mitra and M.L.A. Rai Bahadur Chunilal Bose (ex-Sheriff of Calcutta and Government Chemist) attempted to defend the Government but they were in a minority. P.C. Roy, moving adoption of the Report spiritedly urged the Senate not to surrender its freedom for a "mess of pottage."<sup>3</sup> He wanted them to "show a bold front" against conditions "so humiliating, so gallingly derogatory to our self-respect ....." Asutosh in his closing speech identified the cause of the University with that of Bengali nationalism. "Our reputation", the Vice-Chancellor declared, "has to be saved..... not so much .... the reputation of this University, as the reputation of the Bengali race. .... if this charge (of mismanagement) is established it would prove that we Bengalis are not fit for self-government, for has not this University for years largely been served and managed by the flower of the Bengali race?"<sup>4</sup>

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1. Hundred Years, 198.

2. Ibid.

3. The Calcutta Review, Jan, 1923, 256-264.

4. Ibid.

The motion was put to the vote and passed, no one voting against it.

This show of defiance notwithstanding, the University implemented virtually all of the Accountant General's suggestions, adopting new rules of financial management, appointing a retrenchment committee and publishing the budget in the Calcutta Gazette. Rishindranath Sircar, reviewing the results of his resolution, asked why, having given effect to almost all the conditions proposed by the Government, should the University create so much noise in the name of freedom and autonomy ? Why don't they admit that the conditions were wise and reasonable ? "Instead, they have raised a hue and cry to enlist public sympathy - they are trying to retain the lost confidence on the cant of freedom."<sup>1</sup> In this he was quite correct. The Hindusthan, earlier a harsh critic of the University, turned to finding fault with the Bengal Government as enemy of the University and higher education. Much the same change occurred in the attitude of the Ananda Bazar Patrika and in the Hitavadi, which earlier had pursued Asutosh with charges of nepotism.<sup>2</sup> Asutosh had disarmed opposition with his cry of freedom in danger. Late in February 1923 Government paid the grant to the University.

The Minister claimed victory for himself and his department and proposed a grant of Rs.3,08,000 to the University for 1923-24, again on condition of public accountability.<sup>3</sup> Similarly Lord Lytton, who had assumed office in March 1922, addressing Convocation on 24 March 1923, asserted that the idea of a University "quite independent of the Government ——— though ideally the best, is unattainable in India." He then went on to quote the Sadler Commission to prove that "the connection of Government with the University, and the supervision by Government of the affairs of the

1. BLCP, 25 Jan 1923.

2. See Hindusthan, 8 and 14 Nov 1922; Patrika, 6 and 7 Dec 1922, Hitavadi, 17 Nov 1922 in BNNR., Dec 1922. Harendranath Raychoudhury in the Legislative Council, attacking the conditional grant, said "Anyone who was aware of the spirit with which the Education Department of the Government of India was worked during the last decade and its attitude towards the Calcutta University might almost perceive that with the devolution of the duties that ... attitude also devolved on the Education Department of this unfortunate province." BLCP, 25 Jan 1923.

3. The Calcutta Review, March 1923, 659-64.

University are no new things which we are seeking to create for the first time. They exist today ...."<sup>1</sup> Asutosh, however, in his last long convocation address, drawing inspiration from English precedent, strongly emphasised the need for autonomy : "The University must be free from external control over the range of subjects of study and methods of teaching and research."<sup>2</sup> He felt confident that the fight for independence had not been lost and would be continued, and that the assumption entertained "even by cultured people" that with Government <sup>money</sup> must go Government control was a mistaken ideal.<sup>3</sup>

The address by Sir Asutosh Mookerjee was scarcely welcome to the Bengal Government and his views were clearly at odds with those of his Chancellor. Lytton took a keen interest in the affairs of the University but he found, as others before him, that Asutosh was "a great autocrat, and would not brook any interference on the part of Government with the University, which he regarded as his own. Yet financial assistance from the Government was necessary and the Government could not be expected to make grants to the University without expressing some opinion on the use made of their money - and in many respects Sir Asutosh's administration was open to criticism."<sup>4</sup> The Bengal Government was anxious to legislate a reconstitution of the University's administrative framework since all hope of a wider, more ambitious reconstruction based on the Sadler Commission recommendations had been abandoned. A draft Bill had therefore been prepared "to meet the immediate requirements of a situation which has arisen in Bengal in consequence of the defective financial and academic administration of the University".<sup>5</sup> It was forwarded to the Government of India on 31 January 1923

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1. The Calcutta Review, March 1923.

2. Hundred Years, 292.

3. The Calcutta Review, March 1923.

4. Lord Lytton - Pundits and Elephants, 175.

5. GB to GI, 19 Mar 1923. GB-Edn., IU-7. A10-23, July 1923.

with a request for sanction to introduce it in the Bengal Legislative Council.<sup>1</sup>

The main objects of the Bill were to extend the elective element in the constitution of the Senate from the 20 per cent fixed in 1904 to 65 per cent—55 elected to represent academic interests, plus 10 per cent chosen by the Bengal Legislative Council, with 35 per cent nominated by the Government of Bengal where the Chancellor had hitherto nominated 80 per cent of the Senate. Further, the Bill provided for the creation of an Academic Council, on lines proposed by the Sadler Commission; for the redefinition of the powers of the Chancellor, and for the revival of the office of Rector which would be filled by the Minister of Education. The Bill also sought to prescribe for an increased, though still modest Muslem representation on University bodies. Most controversially it provided for a Board of Financial Control consisting of five members, three of whom would be nominated by Government, two elected by the Senate, as key to various improvements of the financial administration of the University.<sup>2</sup> J.N. Roy, the Special Officer in charge of Education with the Bengal Government admitted that the financial provisions gave stringent powers to Government not found elsewhere in India, but argued they were necessary.<sup>3</sup> The Minister denied, however, that the principle was new. "Ever since the establishment of the Universities in India it has been an accepted principle that the income and expenditure of the Universities ... should be under the direction and regulation of the Government." In Calcutta the need was particularly great to curb abuses: "the percentage of passes has been made ridiculously high in order to bring a larger income to the depleted coffers of the University." "It is very necessary," he argued, "that the financial procedure should be removed beyond the pale of controversy."<sup>4</sup>

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1. GB to GI, 31 Jan 1923. GB-Edn., IU-7, A10-23, July 1923.

2. GB to GI, 19 Mar and 6 May 1923. GB-Edn., IU, A10-23 July 1923. The Sadler Commission had proposed an Academic Council, the supreme academic authority, consisting mainly of teaching staff. Sadler Report, IV, 377.

3. J.N. Roy, Note, 7 Oct 1922. GB-Edn., IU-7, A10-23, July 1923.

4. P.C. Mitter, Note, 9 Oct 1922. Ibid.

The draft Bill was in many ways a moderate document. The debates in the Bengal Legislative Council had shown the new members concerned to assert their control and to impose reforms which would have been distinctly more sweeping. Two private bills had thus earlier been introduced by Jatindranath Basu and Surendranath Mullick. Both would have made the Minister of Education ex-officio Rector of the University, both gave much greater representation to Muslims, both vested in Government a larger financial control over the University, while both would also have transferred the power to nominate from the Chancellor to the Bengal Government<sup>1</sup>. Both were totally rejected by the Senate, after examination by committees headed by Asutosh, on 24 February 1923.<sup>2</sup>

By then Asutosh's fifth term as Vice-Chancellor was coming to a close. His control of the University had never been clearer - as the fate of the two bills illustrated. Relations were already strained between him, P.C. Mitter and Lytton. The Government if it was to legislate for university reform with any hope of success must clearly either secure his co-operation or oust him. A copy of the draft Bill had been sent to the Vice-Chancellor as a confidential document in November 1922. Asutosh not unexpectedly raised serious objections to it. But he did not stop there, but in his opposition to the Bill sought help from the Governments of Assam and India and from Sir Michael Sadler in England.<sup>3</sup> The Government, aware of all these activities, took a grim view of its own Vice-Chancellor working against it and seeking the help of outside agencies to defeat its Bill. Lytton at last determined either to have his open support or outright opposition. Accordingly on 24 March 1923 he wrote to the Vice-Chancellor offering him a further extension if the latter was prepared "to exchange an attitude of opposition for one of whole-hearted assistance"<sup>4</sup>

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1. See The Calcutta Review, March 1923, 639-46.

2. Hundred Years, 303-04.

3. Ibid., 295. Assam could be involved since Calcutta was its University too - indeed the Governor of Assam was ex-officio a member of the Senate. An anomaly of the Basu and Mullick bills was that they would have subordinated the Governor of Assam to the Bengal Minister of Education as Rector of the University.

4. Hundred Years, 295.



Hitherto Asutosh had maintained a moderate stance or had stood outside politics altogether. But at this point he seems to have decided to embark upon a political career, joining the Swaraj party which after the Delhi Congress had decided upon Council entry. Lytton's letter gave him the opportunity of leaving office with a brave show of defiance. Asutosh's misuse of power as Vice-Chancellor had over the years earned him a good deal of unpopularity with the press and the public; of late the Legislative Council had been very critical. Now Lytton had given him the chance to rehabilitate himself, for he knew that for all his own personal faults public opinion in Bengal would not tolerate an attack by an alien Governor upon the powers and independence of the Vice-Chancellor. On 3 April 1923 at a meeting of the Senate he read out Lytton's letter, with its strictures upon his conduct - "your criticisms have been destructive..... you have misrepresented our objects and motives..... you have inspired articles in the press to discredit the Government. You have appealed to Sir Michael Sadler, to the Government of India, and the Government of Assam to oppose our Bill" - and its bribe of a further term as Vice-Chancellor, and then read out his reply to Lytton repudiating his charges in detail and ending, "It may not be impossible for you to secure the services of a subservient Vice-Chancellor, prepared always to carry out the mandate of your Government, and to act as a spy upon the Senate .... I decline the insulting offer you have made to me."<sup>1</sup> On the day on which he relinquished office as Vice-Chancellor he published both letters in the press.<sup>2</sup> (P.C. Mitter writing to Lytton some months later noted that Asutosh was trying to repeat as a judge his coup as a Vice-Chancellor. Asutosh, he reported, "wants to write a judgement on the Post Office Murder case which he thinks will make him politically popular and he will then retire with effect from the 30th September, so that he can put in his nomination paper on the 8th October (and thus) exercise his influence as a Judge for political purposes.)"<sup>3</sup> In the furore that followed publication

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1. Hundred Years, 295.

2. Hundred Years, 294, Broomfield, 194.

3. Mitter to Lytton, 19 Sept.1923. Lytton Collection, Eur.F.160/20. "Sir Asutosh has seen C.R. Das more than once and is arranging to form a compact with C.R. Das.

the Indian papers vied with one another in denouncing the Governor and Education Department and extolling the courage and patriotism of the departing Vice-Chancellor.<sup>1</sup> Capital referred to the University as "the one institution in Bengal which has striven and is striving still in spite of detraction and calumny, to sow the seed of nationality so that it will germinate with vigour and opulent self-respect." The Indian Daily News thought it was party politics that was at the bottom of all this reforming zeal - a stupid blunder Bengal's "new-fledged democrats" were making by covering the University with mud. "Officialisation of the University in 1923 is an anachronism. The public wont tolerate it - never."<sup>2</sup> Bhupendranath Basu, another distinguished lawyer, was appointed to replace Asutosh.

Meanwhile the Bengal Government had been pressing on with its legislative programme but here greater disappointment was in store for it. The Government of India refused to sanction the introduction of the Bill, influenced it would seem by two considerations - the failure to implement the Sadler Commission's proposals and the hostile intervention of the Assam Government.<sup>1</sup> As defence against the charge of not following Sadler Bengal pleaded poverty: they had retrenched one and a half crores in 1921-22, imposed new taxation this year almost to the same amount and still were running a deficit budget, with seven and a half lakhs sliced off the education budget.<sup>2</sup> Asutosh had played upon the jealousy of Assam, the only province still under Calcutta's educational jurisdiction, and its Government protested that the proposed measure would bring the University under the rigid control of the Bengal Government.<sup>3</sup> This Bengal strenuously rebutted: far from desiring control over Calcutta's financial administration it aimed only at limiting "the financial commitments of the University within their available or prospective financial resources."<sup>4</sup> The Government of India

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1. GI to GB, 27 Feb 1923. GB-Edn. IU-7. A10-23, July 1923.

2. GB to GI, 19 March 1923. Ibid.

3. GA to GI, 21 March 1923. Ibid.

4. GB to GI, 6 May 1923. Ibid.

nevertheless found Assam's the more convincing case, as Hornell, D.P.I. for Bengal, acknowledged.<sup>1</sup>

The Government of India, having refused sanction, proceeded to seek a negotiated solution through a series of conferences at which its representative, the Education Member B.N. Sarma, would act as co-ordinator between the Governments of Assam and Bengal and the University of Calcutta.<sup>2</sup> The Government of Bengal also conducted much correspondence and a series of talks and conferences of its own with the University to explore avenues to a settlement. The fruitless search for a negotiated settlement continued from 1924 to 1927. To Asutosh change was certainly unwelcome since his power was so deeply entrenched in the old structure.<sup>3</sup> Mitter, writing to Lytton in September, commented, "Sir Asutosh does not like the present quiet atmosphere in University matters. This quietness is due mainly to Your Excellency's decision about the University conference. I do not want to give him any opportunity to pervert the public till the Conference has met ...."<sup>4</sup> To the new Vice-Chancellor, Basu, a sick man and burdened with high office, the effort was also possibly unwelcome - he was to resign before his term was completed. He certainly did not think he could do much, the politics of Bengal and of the University being what they then were: " ... the Vice-Chancellor of the Calcutta University is practically a non-entity; and unless the Act is changed or the regulations are changed, nothing can be done." "In the present state of our Council I do not see much prospect of a reasonable statute being evolved. Reformation may come about by change of regulation but the Senate will have to be changed considerably before it is at all possible to touch the various vested interests."<sup>5</sup> With three ministries and two

1. Hornell, Note, 19 April 1923. GB-Edn. IU-7. A10-23, July 1923.

2. GB-Edn., IU-7. B20-33, Oct. 1923.

3. "Prabashi has for many years been advocating election of a majority of the Fellows as an effective check upon Government designs. But that could have threatened the dominance of Ashu Babu within the University. That was why he strongly resisted ...any attempt at reforming the University constitution ." Editorial, Prabashi, Aswin 1334, Sept-Oct. 1927, 932-33.

4. Mitter to Lytton, 19 Sept 1923. Lytton Collection, Eur. F.160/20.

5. Basu to Lytton, 28 April 1924. Ibid, Eur.F.160/16.

periods of Governor's rule between January 1924 and January 1927 there was little likelihood of a successful initiative by the politicians.<sup>1</sup> Mutual distrust no less than conflict of aims seemed to preclude any advance.

Yet since the financial embarras<sup>s</sup>ment of the University continued and even grew it was not possible to abandon the search for reform. One cause of the financial difficulty, felt by the colleges as well as the University, was a surge of demand for science courses. Zachariah in the seventh Quinquennial Review of education in Bengal, for 1922-27, noted that after the disruption and loss of fees caused by the Non-Co-operation campaign, a new threat had appeared in the shape of a demand for science. "The arts classes were emptied and colleges which wished to retain their students, found themselves obliged to open science sections, at any rate for the I.Sc. Between 1922 and 1925, about half the colleges in the mufassel obtained affiliation in I.Sc. or B.Sc. or both, and the number of candidates at the I.Sc. jumped from 1,922 to 4,332 in five years. The consciousness of the depreciation of the B.A. degree as a marketable asset caused students to flock to a course which they vaguely hoped would have some "vocational value". Their hopes were rarely fulfilled: meanwhile the colleges were finding science "very expensive to put on."<sup>2</sup>

The University, like the colleges, had been affected by Non-Co-operation, but the switch to science in the post-graduate departments was accompanied by a quite sharp fall in total student numbers, a very damaging occurrence. Zachariah noted that in 1916-17, before the concentration of post-graduate teaching in the University, there had been 1,258 students in University classes and another 464 in college classes. Thereafter the movement was :

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1. The Seventh Bengal Quinquennial Review commented "The post-graduate departments have not been remodelled nor the University shortn of its control over secondary and intermediate education. The instability of ministries in Bengal has, perhaps, contributed to this immobility." BQR, 1922-27, 22-23.

2. BQR, 1922-27, 22-23.

	<u>MA</u>	<u>M.Sc</u>	<u>Total</u>
1922 - 23	881	170	1,051
1923 - 24	1,051	199	1,250
1924 - 25	994	205	1,191
1925 - 26	604	234	838
1926 - 27	696	293	989

The fall in post-graduate Arts numbers and rise in Science imposed a severe financial strain. "A large number of post graduate lecturers had been appointed .... The staff had to be reduced."<sup>1</sup> Moreover the financial basis of the post-graduate departments was still unsound since the terms and conditions of work of the teachers had not been definitely laid down.<sup>2</sup> Before the Government could be asked for aid the Senate appointed a committee in November 1924, to seek a solution of their own. Its final report which was not unanimous was submitted in May 1925.<sup>3</sup> The majority recommended a five year fixed appointment for post-graduate teachers, on set grades, and suggested the precise initial allocation for each Board of Studies, together with some provision for extra-mural lectures. However although the majority recommended immediate abolition of some forty posts, the re-organisation in the long term would require an increase, even over and above the two lakhs a year promised by Lytton in his Convocation address in February 1925.<sup>4</sup>

The minority, which submitted a note of dissent, consisted of four men, E.F. Oaten, the D.P.I., H.E. Stapleton, the Principal of Presidency College, W.S. Urquhart, Principal of the Scottish Churches College and Upendranath Brahmachari, a well-known physician. Their objections were mainly financial:

1. BQR, 1922-27, 22-23.

2. Many were poorly paid, some not paid at all, and others, of the Asutosh family or faction were overpaid. See the answer given on 4 July 1921 to a question in the Bengal Legislative Council about the posts and salaries enjoyed by the newly graduated son of Asutosh, Ramaprasad Mukherjee. GB-Edn. 11C - 100, A46-48, Dec. 1921.

3. See Hundred Years, 320-328, for a general view of its work.

4. Ibid., 321-26. On the majority The Modern Review June 1925, 716, editorialised : "for a number of years, the Senate has consisted of a majority of the followers of Sir Asutosh Mookerjee, and the Committee also consisted for the most part of his followers."

instead of increased financial commitments the University should further reduce the size of its staff and close some of the post-graduate departments.<sup>1</sup> When the Senate considered the report, from 16 to 21 May 1925, there were motions calling for deferment of consideration of the report or for reductions in the number of departments and teachers. Nevertheless the majority report was overwhelmingly accepted.<sup>2</sup> Professor Jadunath Sarkar, who was to be the next Vice-Chancellor, attacked the report - "The die-hards forming the majority of the Committee have thus issued a defiant challenge to the public and the legislative, refusing to make any reform and demanding more money than ever before," and looking to popular claims upon public finances declared "It is for Bengali legislators to decide whether their sons should continue to work under the blight of such a system, or national decay should be arrested by a determined reform of the Calcutta University"<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless when the University asked for a recurring grant of three lakhs a year to finance the majority's recommendations, Lytton not only gave the money, but agreed that Government had no right to pass an opinion on the teaching requirements of the University.<sup>4</sup>

The changes in the post-graduate departments were comparatively minor. Hopes for any major structural alteration rested upon alterations in the balance within Senate or Syndicate. The death of Sir Asutosh Mukherjee in May 1924 might have seemed to herald such a shift. Till then, as the Statesman had commented, change in the Vice-Chancellorship had been unlikely to produce "any new distribution of power. The strong man will always rule, whoever may be in office. Nor would legislation be of much avail in promoting real self-government in the University so long as the powerful personality of Asutosh has to be reckoned with."<sup>5</sup> Basu certainly believed

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1. Hundred Years, 326.

2. Ibid., 326-27.

3. The Modern Review, July 1925, 8-12.

4. GB - Edn., IU-32 of 1930, A1-26, March 1931.

5. The Statesman, 27 March 1923.

that with Asutosh's passing "the whole organisation of the University may be reconstituted and put under the control of the Senate."

Asutosh was the elected President of both Post-Graduate Councils and of fourteen Boards of Studies, as well as Dean of the two Faculties.

"Besides he was practically the Director of the University College of Science and the University College of Law. In short he was the one man who was working the whole show ..... If we can get a Vice-Chancellor now, comparatively young and energetic, I think he may be able to effect a great change in the University without having recourse to any legislation."<sup>1</sup>

The person actually chosen as Vice-Chancellor was scarcely the active young man Basu had hoped for, but someone reluctant to take the part and already burdened with high office, Sir Ewart Greaves, Justice of the High Court.<sup>2</sup> Lytton was doubtless unwilling to give an opening to his political opponents by pressing for too active a reformist policy, indeed he went out of his way in an eulogy of Sir Asutosh to conciliate moderate opinion.<sup>3</sup> There were others, however, who were ready to press an attack against his party. The Modern Review described the University as "controlled by a clique of inner men who have brought higher education in Bengal to a state of uselessness and high sounding ignorance"<sup>4</sup> and Professor Jadunath Sarkar launched a most direct attack. He identified four problems facing the University : the rehabilitation of the standard of university examinations; the decline in efficiency of colleges; the stabilization of the post-graduate department, and the freeing of the administration from individual or factional domination. He was scathing about the mercenary lowering of standards, noting that of

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1. Basu to Lytton 29 May 1924. Lytton Collection, Eur. F. 160/16.

2. Basu to Lytton 12 July 1924. Lytton Collection, Eur. F. 160/16.

3. "It will have a great and good effect ", Basu to Lytton 17 June 1924. Ibid.

4. The Modern Review, Oct 1925, 476.

14,000 passes at the last matriculation examination 8,000 had been placed in the first division. How ? - "by the grace of Saraswati (an honorary title borne by Asutosh) - for though he is dead, his spirit still liveth and worketh among the academic birds (probably swans) that haunt the lake in College Square."<sup>1</sup> When the University responded to the public cry for retrenchment, the Committee appointed by the Senate asked for more money for post-graduate studies. And while the enlarged electorate cried out for primary schools and rural dispensaries the Asutosh group prepared to spend "large sums of public money for the highest education of the bhadralok classes "<sup>2</sup> . In October 1925 he returned to the charge, commenting bitterly on the lowering of standards under Asutosh : "His agents in this work were mainly members of the teaching staff, whose tenure and various emoluments depended on him, and who have been familiarised with his examination methods and principles. These men hold a major portion of the head examinerships and tabulatorships and thus influence the 'results.' These are still controlling the under-graduate examinations."<sup>3</sup>

The Modern Review in February 1926 scornfully noted that the defence of the University against these attacks had been entrusted to "a temporary junior lecturer of the Calcutta Post-graduate Department." And now, it added, "the Vice-Chancellor Sir Ewart Greaves, has publicly announced the same conclusions and suggested the same line of reform as Professor Sarkar "<sup>4</sup>

It was Jadunath Sarkar who on 8 August 1926 succeeded Sir Ewart Greaves as Vice-Chancellor. The appointment was a bold one, and roused

1. The Modern Review, July 1925, 8-12. (Saraswati is the Hindu goddess of learning, who rides on a swan.)

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid., Oct, 1925.

4. Ibid., Feb, 1926, 249. "No one, I think, contemplates with equanimity the present educational system of the province ... and it is a matter of grave concern ... that Bengali candidates for the Indian Civil Service and other all-India Services are not occupying in these examinations the places to which their intellectual attitude entitles them ", Sir Ewart Greaves, Serampore College convocation. Before he laid down his office as Vice-Chancellor he did, however, complain of undue Government interference in University affairs. See Forward, 10 Aug, 1926. BNNR Aug, 1926.



much apprehension in the Senate.<sup>1</sup> "Mr Sircar was a vitriolic critic of this University before his appointment," the Calcutta Review recognised," and his appointment did not, we must frankly confess, receive universal approbation."<sup>2</sup> The Bengal Government certainly hoped that he would shake up the University. The Education Secretary, Lindsay, writing privately to Hartog at Dacca noted Sarkar's good administrative record, and then went on. "Of course, the appointment has raised a strong protest from those at present in power ... but if anything is going to be done with Calcutta University, it seems essential to put in somebody who will be able to take a stand for a newer and better policy."<sup>3</sup>

The politics of Bengal in this period, with Government forces and Swarajists very evenly balanced, a spell of Governor's rule, an election and communal rioting, were not conducive to the passage of legislation to reform the University. What was achieved under Sarkar was the breaking of the grip on the University of the Asutosh faction. The process had begun earlier.<sup>4</sup> Now it gathered strength, and within months of Jadunath, an IES man, taking charge, accusations of "officialisation" of the University began.

1. Forward called Sarkar "a confirmed partisan." His appointment, "an act of vandalism", was Lord Lytton's revenge for the bloody nose he had got when he poked it into University affairs in 1922. Forward, 30 June 1926. BNNR, July 1926.

2. The Calcutta Review, Oct, 1926, 174-75. The Editor-in-chief and the Secretary of the Review were both old Asutosh men.

3. J.H. Lindsay to Hartog, 22 June 1926. Hartog Collection, Eur. F. 221 The Modern Review, Sept. 1926, 340. applauded the appointment of this Bengali scholar, educationist and researcher, and denounced the "section of the Calcutta Press, and small coterie of people in the Calcutta University" who had set up an unseemly agitation against him.

4. E.F. Oaten, DPI from 1924, noted on 5 November 1923 that "with the gradual change which is going on in the personnel of the Senate I think we may hope soon for more common sense there even in the absence of reform". GB-Edn., 5F-19, A54-56, Oct, 1925.

Prabashi noted "Ever since the news of the appointment of Jadunath Sarkar became public some of the leaders of the University have been busy maligning him. They tried really hard to get his appointment cancelled ... to safeguard their vested interests they ran from pillar to post - from newspaper offices right up to Government House, raising all sorts of objections against his appointment. They ended up by making a laughing-stock of themselves."<sup>1</sup> They did prevent him, as Vice-Chancellor, from securing a place on any of the Boards of Study which he stood for,<sup>2</sup> but he was able gradually to dislodge the Asutosh bloc from many of its strong-points. In January 1927 the Hitavadi noted that independent-minded Fellows were not being re-appointed - "many are of the opinion that the Government is determined to turn the University into a khas department".<sup>3</sup> In March Manmathanath Roy, MLC for Howrah, speaking on the education budget, noted that since Jadunath's appointment the University, which had so long foiled Government attempts to dominate it, had now become "a limb of the bureaucracy".<sup>4</sup> He accused the Vice-Chancellor of conspiring with the Education Secretary and the DPI to officialise the administration of the University. On the eve of the election of members of the Syndicate and the different Faculties by the Senate the DPI summoned to his office all the official and many of the nominated members of the Senate. As a result, said Roy, three non-officials, one of them a former Vice-Chancellor who had been a Syndic for the last twenty-five years, were replaced by two officials and one pro-government man. The DPI now ruled in the Syndicate, flanked by both his assistants and the principals of all three government colleges in Calcutta. That the Government could now boast of a

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1. Prabashi, Bhadra 1333 (Aug-Sept 1926), 857-58.

2. Ibid., Sarkar stood for the Boards of Higher Studies in English, History, Arabic-Persian and Anthropology. Prabashi commented "The fact that a scholar like Jadunath Sarkar could not get elected ... is, according to our opinion, due to factionalism. We think that Professor Radhakrishnan's comment regarding absence of any daladali within the University was wrong."

3. Hitavadi, 14 Jan 1927, gave Girish Chandra Bose, Abanindra Nath Tagore and P. Bruhl as examples of displaced Fellows. BNNR, Jan, 1927.

4. BLCP, 22 March 1927, 395. Roy was a Fellow and a Professor in the University Law College.

majority in the Syndicate was something unheard of in recent memory.<sup>1</sup>

In the same debate Bidham Chandra Roy mentioned men like the Hardinge Professor of Mathematics or Professor S.C. Mahalanobis as being driven out because "they voted in a particular way on particular occasions which displeased the Director."<sup>2</sup> (Maulvi Muhammad Sadeque, on the other hand, thanked Oaten for getting more Muslims into the Syndicate "through the official door," thus breaking the monopoly of Sir Asutosh's lieutenants.)<sup>3</sup>

Oaten, the D.P.I. denied any attempt at officialisation, disingenuously claiming only "certain readjustments" which had resulted "in certain professional educationists in the University, who by an accident are officials, obtaining their legitimate influence." In any case officials had rights as well as non-officials<sup>als</sup> to representation and the Syndicate "should contain a fair sprinkling of officials".<sup>4</sup>

The Bengalee argued that the proportion of officials and non-officials in the Senate had not altered - the cry of "officialisation" was only the cry of the dislodged Asutosh group.<sup>5</sup> This theme was again heard from the Prabashi - more loudly : "The slogan of independence of the University raised by the Mukherjee - Banerjee faction in Calcutta University is nothing but an attempt to preserve their dominant position within it. They have their own axes to grind. Many of them make a handsome living out of salaries, examination fees and so on ... but as one

1. BLCP - 22 March 1927, 396. The ex-Vice-Chancellor was Sir Nilratan Sircar.

2. Roy became Vice-Chancellor in 1942. BLCP - 23 March 1927, 415  
The Calcutta Review, Oct 1926, 176-7, quoted the Amrita Bazar Patrika as asking if "Government is going to rid the Senate of all persons of independent views?"

3. BLCP - 23 March 1927, 422.

4. Ibid. 409, 411. Oaten also commented that on appointment he had been "struck with the anomaly that in Bengal college and school education was controlled by a body of 17 men in which there was not a single Muhammadan".

5. The Bengalee, 4 Feb 1927. BNNR, Feb 1927.

cannot slaughter one chicken in four or five different places, so a person cannot sacrifice his one body and soul in the High Court, the Law College, post-graduate classes, Senate, Faculties and Boards of Studies."<sup>1</sup> What is clear, however, is that under Jadunath Sarkar change really began to bite - as Manmathra Nath Roy demonstrated, speaking in the budget debate in March 1928. "During the last year," he said, "the activities of the University have been largely directed towards getting rid of ... men of the old party ...." In recent elections to the Board of Studies in Teaching seven of the nine chosen were officials - and when the Faculty of Arts co-opted members, five government officials got in. "What is the policy behind this ? .... The principals and the other authorities in some of the colleges seem to be anxious to inculcate slave mentality in the students."<sup>2</sup>

The encroachment of new men seemed so threatening that in mid-December the 'Mukherjee-Banerjee' group came up with proposals of their own in the Legislative Council. They were introduced on 13 and 14 December by Pramathanath Banerjee, Professor of Economics, and by Manmathanath Roy, and had identical aims - "to provide a constitution for the University which is calculated to enable this body to perform its functions independently of outside control and promote the best interests of the people of the province."<sup>3</sup> Both claimed to provide a reconstruction of the Senate on democratic lines, with due representation for the various teaching interests and the different courses of study - though neither made any provision for special Muslim representation.<sup>4</sup> Banerjee's Bill provided for 100 Ordinary Fellows, 80 to be elected by the Registered Graduates, Faculties, University and College teachers and 20 nominated by

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1. Prabashi, Aswin 1334 (Sept-Oct 1927), 932-34.

2. BLCF - 22 March 1928.

3. Ibid - 13-14 Dec 1927.

4. Ibid.

the Chancellor, (a reversal of the existing pattern) and a body of ex-officio Fellows which would include the Principals of 21 colleges and the Presidents of the Post-Graduate Councils but would exclude the DPI. To this exclusion Roy, in his Bill, proposed to add all members of the Executive Council, the Education Secretary to Government and the Principal of Presidency College. Both were thus designed to exclude the official element and greatly strengthen the elected element - and incidentally to save the old Asutosh following from further loss.<sup>1</sup>

The Bills were referred to the Senate for its opinion, and in turn the Senate appointed a committee to report upon them. The Committee's comments came before the Senate on 4 February 1928 and from the discussions that ensued emerged the outlines of a draft scheme for that body's reconstitution. The long term aim remained to implement the Sadler reforms, the short term aim to enlarge the elected at the expense of the nominated element. In a Senate of 160 one fourth should be elected by the registered teachers of the affiliated colleges; one fourth by the registered graduates; one fifth by University professors and teachers plus the principals of first grade colleges, one tenth by learned societies and public bodies, another tenth by high-school teachers and just one tenth nominated by Government.<sup>2</sup> The response of Government was to appoint W.A. Jenkins, an IES officer who later became Vice-Chancellor of Dacca, to draft legislation. His Bill was duly placed before the Senate for consideration on 26 February 1929, but though looked at by the Senate both in 1930 and 1931 there it remained.<sup>3</sup> Jadunath Sarkar had refused to accept the second term offered him in August 1928 and his successor Dr W.S. Urquhart, Principal of Scottish

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1. BLCF - 13-14 Dec 1927. Among the proposed ex-officio Fellows was the Mayor of Calcutta - head of the other great prize in Bengal - and three Judges of the High Court.

2. Hundred Years, 356-7.

3. Ibid., 357.

Churches College, was content, it seems, to allow the search for agreed legislative change to lapse.<sup>1</sup> This was made possible by the improvement in relations between the University and the Bengal Government, and made necessary by the political pre-occupations of the latter.

The universities founded in India in 1857 introduced not only new bodies of knowledge, new patterns of academic specialisation and disciplines, but also new ideas of how to organise and administer education. Through them the State would regulate and control the work of both colleges and secondary schools across the province. But it would do so through Senates and Syndicates consisting largely of educated but non-expert laymen. The actual teaching on the other hand would be conducted in self-contained colleges : teaching was divorced from academic control.<sup>2</sup>

By the twentieth century both secondary schools and colleges in Bengal had largely passed into private Indian hands, fees were more important than government grants, the Calcutta Senate had swollen to unmanageable size. There was a clear threat to the quality of higher education and to government control over it. Curzon sought the remedy in allowing the teachers more say in university affairs and in enlarging the European share in such university bodies as the Senate. The twin aims of maintaining standards and re-asserting official control were embodied in the Indian Universities Act of 1904.

Neither aim was fulfilled. Instead a minor provision in the Act for some post-graduate teaching under University auspices was seized upon by Asutosh Mookerjee, chosen by Government to implement the reforms, and used with skill, inventive ingenuity and ruthlessness to quite alter the role of

1. Jadunath Sarkar's refusal to continue may have been on financial grounds. His income presumably consisted of his IES pension and the royalties from his books. The Vice-Chancellorship was too burdensome to leave time for creative writing and the attempt by Government to push through a budget proposal for a monthly salary of Rs 2,500 for the Vice-Chancellor was defeated in Council, denounced as a "lollipop" and "convenient bait in the hands of unscrupulous ministers". BLCP, 22 March 1928, 392.

2. Teachers as teachers had little say in the drawing up of syllabuses, choice of text-books, appointment of examiners or award of degrees.

Calcutta University and subvert the main principles of Curzon's legislation. When he took office in 1906 university business was light, routine, insufficient to require a regular office establishment. When he left in 1923 he had created a major teaching unit, an educational empire.

It had been difficult to halt Calcutta's progress, though both the cost and political implications of its growth alarmed Government, for Asutosh could constantly appeal to British example : few Englishmen could quarrel with the ideal of a self-governing university, in touch with the life of the nation, free to teach and undertake research, free from external control. Yet the new regime lowered standards and evaded Government control.

Asutosh had created the new teaching University - and a new role for the Vice-Chancellor,<sup>1</sup> exploiting his knowledge of bye-laws and regulations, his patronage, the authority of his office to make the University's machinery his own. And by appealing to the patriotic pride of Bengalis he had secured donations which rendered the University financially less dependent and had enlisted powerful defenders in the Legislative Council. He was at once able, powerful, unscrupulous and imaginative so that he could win the backing of the Governor, Lord Carmichael, and of Sir Michael Sadler in England, and even after his loss of the Vice-Chancellorship maintain his grip upon the University.

The Government of India proved helpless in the face of this challenge. Reform such as proposed by Sadler with the creation of a new non-University administration of High School and Intermediate education it could not afford. A concentration of post-graduate teaching in Presidency College

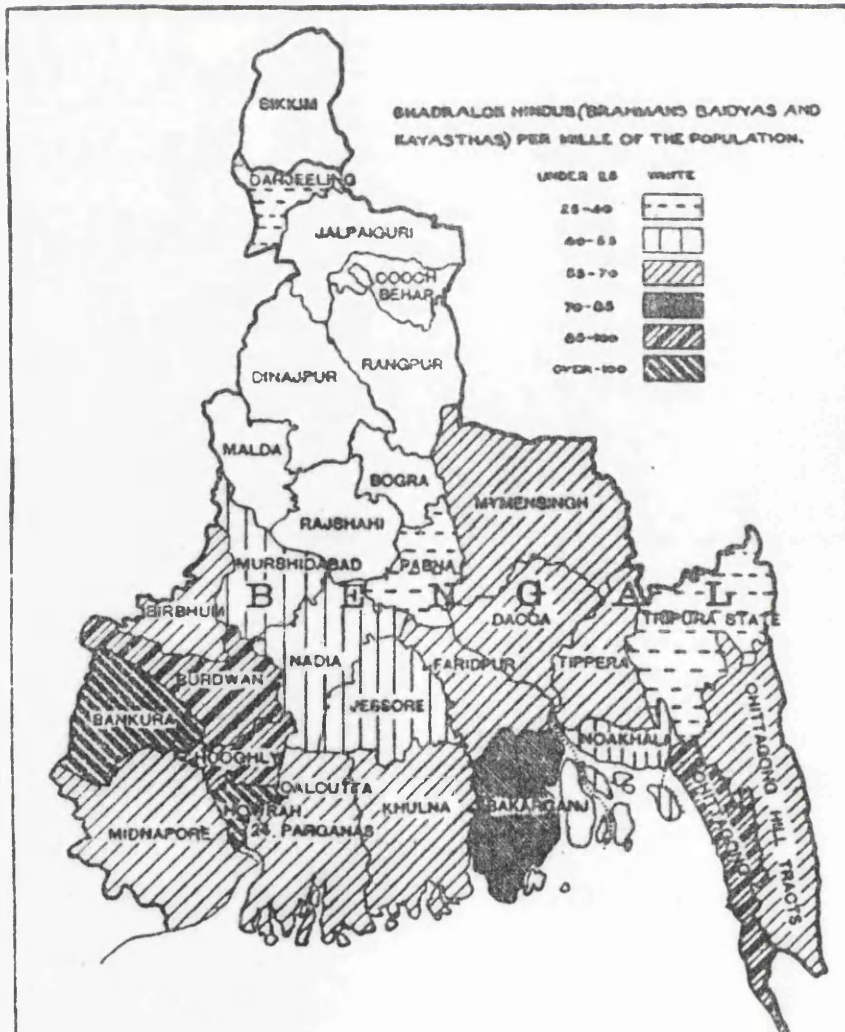
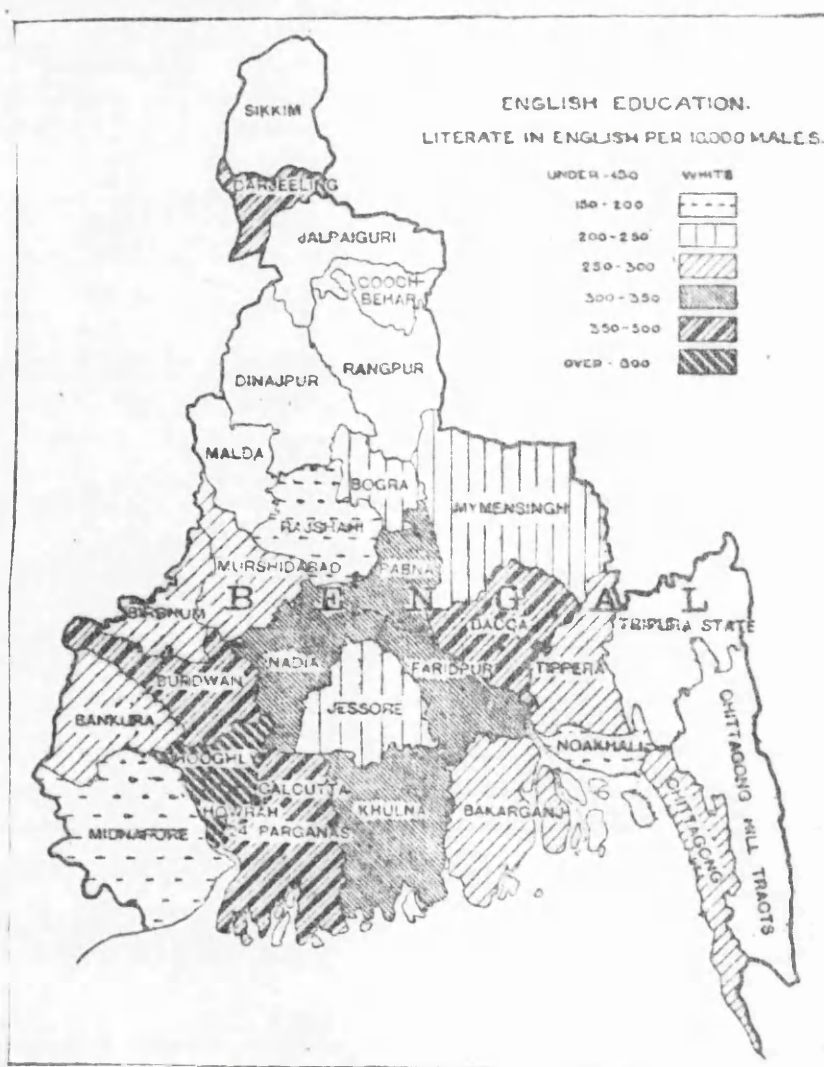
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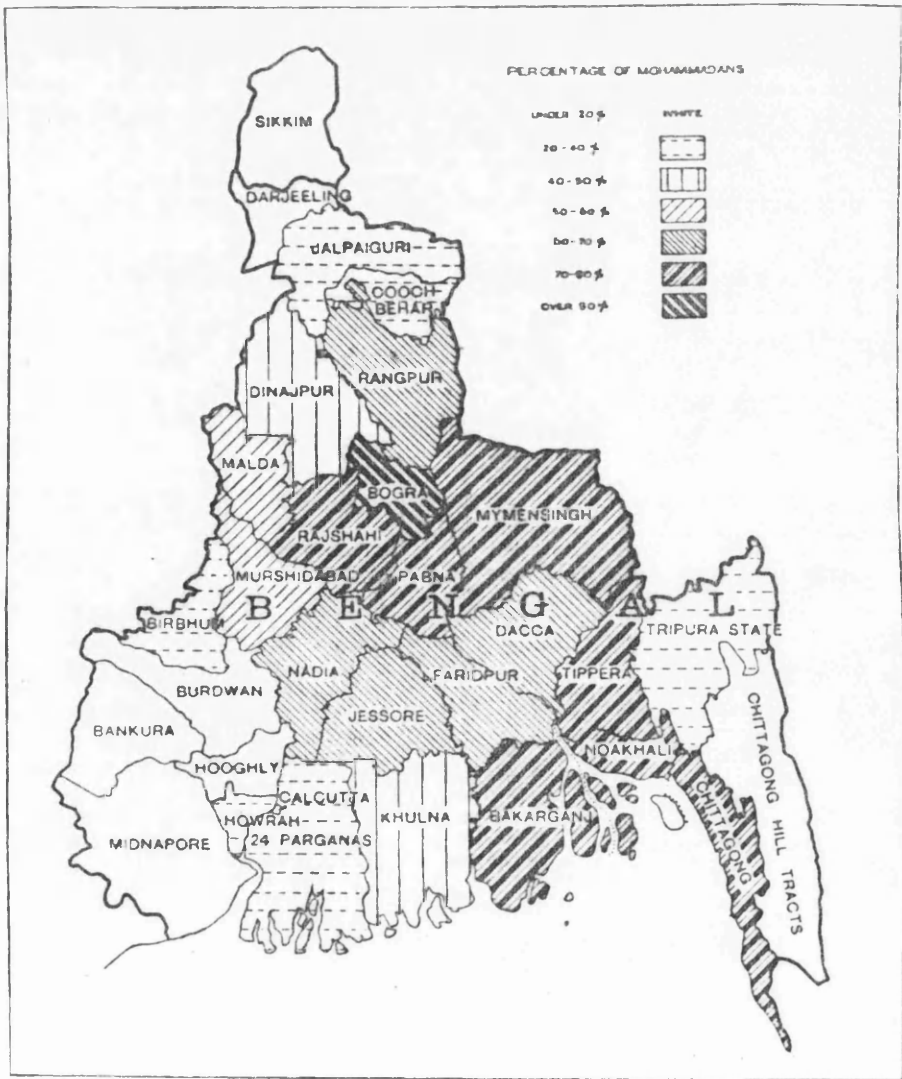
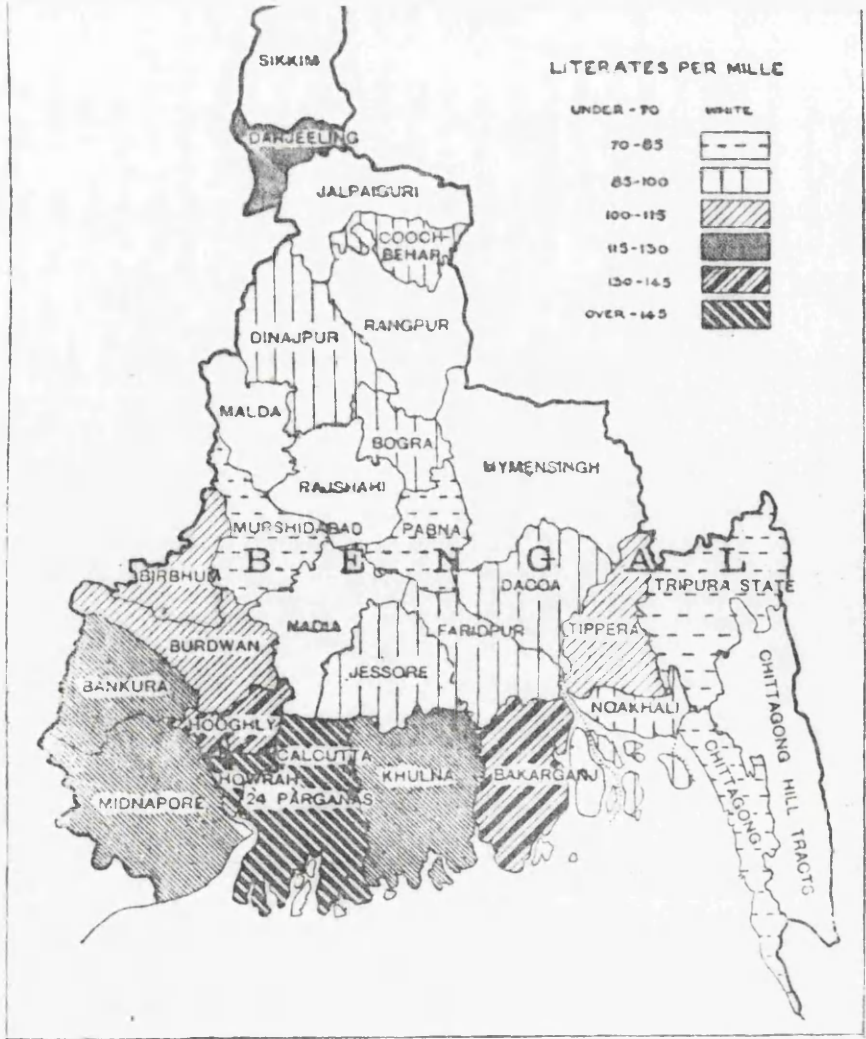
1. On the Vice-Chancellor's role the Report of the Robbins Committee said, as though with Asutosh in mind, " It would be difficult to overstate his importance, particularly in a period of expansion which calls for imagination and continuous initiative .... He is at once a member of the governing body and chairman of the main Academic Councils. He must therefore be at the centre of all discussion involving broad questions of internal policy or relations with the outside world. He must represent his institution ...." Quoted in Moodie and Eustace, 130.

or the creation of more local universities on the Dacca model, Henry Sharp's proposal, was thought politically (and financially) impossible. Under Dyarchy financial considerations loomed so large that any pretence at full-scale re-organisation had to be abandoned. Calcutta University remained a swollen, sprawling structure, with 27,000 Intermediate and undergraduate students, catering to a metropolis and a province, but without organisation, physical equipment or financial resources to match.









### CHAPTER III

Secondary education in Bengal was imparted in three types of school, the Middle Vernacular, the Middle English and the High English Schools. After four years of primary education children could go on to two years in a Middle School and then for four more years to a High English School which, in its final class, prepared them for the Matriculation examination which was the door to collegiate education.

The Middle Vernacular Schools were designed to serve a particular purpose - that of enabling village boys who could not proceed to English schools to receive 'the elements of a liberal education'. The medium of instruction was Bengali and the curriculum included arithmetic, geometry, history, geography, drawing and hand-work, object lessons and science, including agriculture and village sanitation.<sup>1</sup> These schools consolidated and extended the education of the village boy, and were intended to equip him for a better life in the village. Very often they were glorified primary schools, set in more populous villages, and often contained all the classes of the primary school as well as the two middle classes.

In the Middle English Schools English was a compulsory subject though instruction was given in the vernacular. Instruction in these schools came to be regarded as merely preparatory to the High School stage. Unlike that given in the Middle Vernacular School it did not end and was not intended to end a well-defined stage in secondary education. The medium of the High English Schools was normally English, although in practice this was not rigidly followed, instruction being given in a mixture of English and the mother tongue.

The Middle Vernacular Schools were never popular in Bengal, where

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1. Rules and Orders of the Education Department, Bengal, 1927, 171, 212-16.

"the educational system ... appears to have been organised, primarily, for giving English education to the middle class people who live mostly in towns."<sup>1</sup> They were already in decline by the turn of the century,<sup>2</sup> and from the First World War the decline became precipitate. In the 1920's a regulation permitted them to introduce English as an optional subject,<sup>3</sup> while after 1935 Calcutta University made the vernacular the medium of instruction in all secondary schools.<sup>4</sup> But neither measure halted the decline of the Middle Vernacular Schools in Bengal, as the following table demonstrates :

<u>Year</u>	<u>Number of M.V. Schools</u>	<u>Number of Pupils</u>
1886	1,157	64,000
1902	970	53,000
1916 - 17	349	21,000
1926 - 27	74	5,000
1936 - 37	42	3,100

Sources : IQR, 1897 - 1901, II, 72; BQR, 1927-32, II, 32; BQR, 1932-37 II, 49

This was a very different situation from that in Bombay or the Punjab where Middle Vernacular schools were rapidly growing in number.<sup>5</sup> Obviously it was not education at large, but English education, and especially English education leading on to university, which aroused enthusiasm in Bengal.

Those who sought so avidly for an English education were from the middle classes, the bhadralok as British officials termed them, drawn almost

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1. BQR, 1932-37, I, 47. Orange, reviewing the future of these schools, in 1907 commented "... parents who are willing to permit their boys to attend school up to the age of 15 or 16 usually desire them to attend an Anglo-vernacular school, which they regard as being a better investment. The careers open to scholars with only a vernacular training are generally those of village teacher and village accountant; in most forms of clerical employment even a smattering of English has its value and dips the scale against vernacular schools." IQR, 1902-07, 149.

2. IQR, 1897-1901, II, 72.

3. BQR, 1922-27, I, 39.

4. Hundred Years, I, 338-46.

5. BQR, 1932-37, I, 47.

entirely from the three highest Hindu castes in the province - Brahman, Baidya and Kayastha, together with a sprinkling of Muslims of birth, wealth or education.<sup>1</sup> They were relatively more numerous in Bengal than were the corresponding castes in other parts of India, and had long supplied the community with its priests, teachers, lawyers, doctors, administrators, writers and clerks. Successive governments, Hindu, Muslim and British had relied on them for their corps of minor officials, and, indeed for many of their senior officials too. "They have therefore always formed an educated class," commented the Sadler Report, "and it may safely be said that there is no class of corresponding magnitude and importance in any other country which has so continuous a tradition of literacy, extending over so many centuries."<sup>2</sup> In the nineteenth century they eagerly took to English education - as they had taken to Persian during Muslim rule - and seized the lion's share of professional, administrative and clerical employment under the British throughout eastern and northern India.<sup>3</sup>

One common attribute was that they did not undertake manual work. Thus many were landholders - but not agriculturalists. They lived upon the rent from their lands, or from lands held as under-tenure holders, or from lending money at high interest rates to the peasantcultivators. This rural middle class also included the local school and post-masters, and the local agents of absentee landholders. In the twentieth century subdivision of estates reduced what J.C. Jack called "too large a proportion of the class" to grinding poverty.<sup>4</sup> Some of the smaller landholders and rentiers were trapped by their poverty in their village homes. But

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1. The Census of India, Vol.V, Bengal for 1911 gave 639,000 male Brahmans, 567,000 Kayasthas, and 44,000 Baidyas of whom two-thirds, three fifths and three quarters respectively were literate. Two other castes nearly approached them in social and economic status, the goldsmiths or Subarnabanik, and the Gandhabanik, two thirds and half of whom were literate. Their corresponding numbers were small, however, 15,000 and 12,000 respectively.

2. Sadler Report, I,28.

3. See, for example, K.W. Jones, 'The Bengali Elite in Post-Annexation Punjab', Indian Economic and Social History Review, III,4 (1966) 376-95.

4. J.C. Jack, The Economic Life of a Bengal District, 89. The third chapter of this study of Faridpur District contains an excellent analysis of the position of bhadralok in the countryside.

increasing numbers moved to the towns and cities, entering the learned professions, law, medicine or engineering, or becoming clerks in the employment of government, local bodies, merchants and traders. The more adventurous moved up country, out of Bengal, in service or the professions. By the start of our period, however, prospects for the bhadralok, even outside Bengal, had grown less favourable. The Report of the Sedition Committee of 1918 commented, "Originally they predominated in all offices and higher grade schools throughout Upper India .... When, however, similar classes in other provinces also acquired a working knowledge of English, the field for Bengali enterprise gradually shrank. In their own province bhadralok still almost monopolise the clerical and subordinate services of Government. They are prominent in medicine, in teaching, and at the Bar. But ... they have felt the shrinkage of foreign employment (and their) hold on land too has weakened...."<sup>1</sup>

The response to worsening economic circumstances of the bhadralok was to press for more education and higher qualifications. Not everybody could afford education for all his sons, but that was the good, the ideal - an education in one of the Anglo-Vernacular schools leading to a Calcutta University degree and white-collar employment. The Sadler Commission commented in vivid language upon the volume and intensity of the demand for higher education, and upon the economic pressure, "straitening, in some cases to the point of penury, the already narrow means of many families belonging to the respectable classes in Bengal "<sup>2</sup> Such families, it commented, were impelled by the claims upon a dwindling income "to seek for all (their) sons the education which alone gives access to the callings regarded as suitable for their choice. The sacrifices made by these families and by the boys themselves in order to get education are severe and silently borne. Higher education in Bengal is being bought at the

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1. Sedition Committee Report, 11-12.

2. Sadler Report, IV, 3.

price of self-denial and, in many cases, of actual hunger. To the members of the respectable classes English high schools are of a social necessity."<sup>1</sup>

To this process Government itself contributed by making matriculation or a degree a necessary qualification for more and more posts. The evidence offered to the Sadler Commission by J.G. Cumming, based on the civil list for 1917, showed how large a percentage of the main provincial services in Bengal was manned by graduates, even in posts carrying salaries as low as Rs.75 per month:

	<u>Percentage of Graduates</u>
Provincial Judicial Service	99
Provincial	88.7
Subordinate Executive Service and Probationary Sub-Deputy Collectors	77
Provincial Education Service	89.7
Subordinate Educational Service	64.7
Provincial Excise Service	46.6
Subordinate Excise Service	41.2
Registration Department	9.7
Provincial Police Service	34.4

Source : Sadler Report, XI, 123.

Alongside this may be set the evidence of J.H. Kerr demonstrating by his analysis of appointments within the last five years as against all existing appointments how rapidly the upgrading of educational qualifications was proceeding. Thus though the overall figures for the Registration Department was low in Cumming's table, Kerr shows that 35 of the 110 appointments made in the last five years had been of graduates.<sup>2</sup>

1. Sadler Report, IV, 4. The Report also notes the social significance of such education to those aspiring to become members of the bhadralok, cultivators enjoying the new prosperity brought by jute cultivation in Eastern Bengal, for example. To them education was "the recognised pathway to respectability and social advancement . . . the one channel of escape from the rigid social barriers imposed by the system of caste." Ibid., I, 27.

2. Ibid., XI, 144-151. Kerr records that for clerks in the Bengal Secretariat in the upper and lower divisions, a degree or a complete secondary school course were essential prior qualifications, though the lowest grade earned only Rs.40 a month. Cumming was a member of the Bengal Executive Council, and Kerr Chief Secretary to the Government of Bengal.



At a humbler level still, L. Birley, Collector of Dacca, reported forty applications, half of them B.A's, for the Rs.40 a month job as second clerk in the Dacca Club, and twenty-seven B.As, nine of them unemployed at the time, applying for two vacancies at the Narayanga High School. From Mymensingh the Collector H.E. Spry reported, however, that of the 139 ministerial, or clerical, officers in his office, drawing salaries between Rs.30 and Rs.175 only three had First Arts, given after two years at university, but 83 were matriculates. But four recent vacancies for probationer-ships had attracted over fifty applicants, one with First Arts and some 14 who had passed the University Entrance examination. Spry noted. "To a certain extent the Entrance failed are being replaced by passed men."<sup>1</sup> And what Government prescribed those in its service cherished, as F.J. Monahan noted. He, somewhat eccentrically, was urging an increased use of Bengali in government offices and acknowledged "The changes here proposed are not likely to be popular at the outset with clerks or with Indian gazetted officers, and this is very natural. All natives of India who have acquired any knowledge of English rightly value it as a mark of superior education and as a medium of advanced civilization...."<sup>2</sup>

The result of such attitudes in the bhadralok, the class which Jack saw as embracing 'every man of education and influence and nearly every man of wealth,'<sup>3</sup> was an insistent demand for English secondary schools, or Anglo-Vernacular schools as they were called. That demand, the most striking feature of the educational system of Bengal, was met by private enterprise, encouraged by Government through its system of grants-in-aid.

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1. Bengal District Administration Committee Report, Appx III, 33-35. Spry's last point is borne out by the figures for appointments to Sub-Inspectorships of Police :

	<u>1912</u>	<u>1913</u>	
Entrance	14	80	
Non-Entrance	1	2	<u>Ibid.</u> 36.

2. Sadler Report, XI, 165. Monahan was Commissioner, Presidency Division.

3. Jack, 89.

There was a remarkable growth in the number of English schools, Middle and High. Thus of the three thousand or so English schools in all India in 1902 Bengal had a third, and of their total of four hundred thousand pupils, Bengal had nearly half. Where Bengal averaged thirty secondary schools per district, the United Provinces had only four.<sup>1</sup> But of the 1,481 Bengal secondary schools only 54 were government managed, with another 35 under the control of local government bodies. All the rest were privately managed, over a third of them without any supporting grant from Government.<sup>2</sup>

Bhadralok demand brought these private schools into existence; bhadralok poverty required them to be cheap. The average annual cost of a boy's instruction in a Bengal secondary school was only Rs.18 as compared with Rs.38 in Bombay, Rs.36 in the United Provinces and Rs.28 in Madras.<sup>3</sup> Similarly the fees in Bengal schools were lower than in any other province. Only a very few of the teachers were trained for their work; one sixth of them had no qualification capable of being defined. Their salaries were low relative to other services in the province. In the best High Schools under public control, the salary ranged from Rs.25 to Rs.80.<sup>4</sup> It was because of the low salaries of the teachers and unexact standards for accommodation and equipment demanded for recognition by the University and, in the case of aided schools by the Government for eligibility for grants-in-aid that venture schools could be maintained in large numbers on the pupils' fees, low though these were. Here was a vicious circle : education in these schools was bad because it was cheap, and cheap because it was bad.

Ideally, it ought to have been the business of the Department of

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1. A. Basu, The Growth of Education and Political Development in India, 1898-1920, 101-02.

2. IQR, 1892-1902, II, 71. The large number of schools which were unaided reflected both the Government's lack of funds and the inability or unwillingness of many of these schools to accept departmental conditions for grants in aid.

3. IQR, 1897-98-1901-02, II, 71.

4. IQR, 1897-1902, II, 71.

Public Instruction to adopt remedial measures. But the Department was handicapped by a chronic shortage of funds - its Inspectorate was neither large enough to keep in touch with all the schools nor was the staff as a whole organised for this type of work even if it had had the power to undertake it. But in many cases it did not have the power. The Department had, and could have, no power over such schools as did not accept grants-in-aid, even upon those which did, it could not impose stringent conditions for fear of placing them at a disadvantage as compared with private unaided Schools, so forcing them to opt out of the system and to live on fees alone. The unaided schools were subject only to the control of the Calcutta University, exercised through its entrance examination, which regulated the curriculum of the higher classes in all the High Schools, government, aided and unaided alike.

The University did its best to meet its responsibility by refusing to admit candidates from any school not recognised by it. But university recognition, although it was a most valuable privilege, much coveted by the unaided schools, was loosely and easily given. This was inevitable as the University had no inspecting or supervisory staff of its own; its governing bodies were not constituted for control of school-work and were much too pre-occupied with a multiplicity of other labours. Moreover, the University naturally devoted its attention to the requirements of those who after their matriculation would proceed to a University course. It could not deal with those aspects of school life which did not lend themselves to a test in an examination hall. The suitability of the school course for those boys who would terminate their education at the end of their school life was no concern of the University's although such boys, in all countries, even in Bengal, constituted the great majority.

The first major attempt to take stock of this haphazard growth of secondary education and to impose some order upon it was made by Curzon at Simla in 1901. His policy for secondary education, like that for the

universities, was one of consolidation and improvement rather than of expansion. In contrast with the policies so long held by the Indian Government Curzon was opposed to the doctrine of total State withdrawal from educational enterprise and maintained that in every branch of education Government should manage a few highly efficient institutions to maintain standards and provide a model for private enterprise. In this he was no doubt partly influenced by the inefficiency and wastage of the Indian education system but his views also reflected changing ideas in England regarding the relation between the State and private enterprise. In England, for a long time, provision of secondary education had been left to private initiative in the mistaken belief that secondary education for the people could be self-supporting - living in the main upon fees paid by the pupils. Such a laissez-faire attitude could not continue when evidence accumulated that England was being left behind by other western countries in educational, economic and industrial progress.<sup>1</sup> During the last decades of the nineteenth century Government's role became an active one, with large grants-in-aid being offered, subject to inspection, for higher and technical education. The Royal Commission on Secondary Education, the Bryce Commission, of 1894-95 had for its remit "to consider what are the best methods of establishing a well-organised system of secondary education in England".<sup>2</sup> The failure of private enterprise to deal adequately with educational deprivation and under-provision had generated a public opinion favourable to increased State intervention. Curzon's determination to give a larger role to Government in secondary education, expressed in the Resolution on Indian educational policy published on 11 March 1904 was thus

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1. After studying German technical education the Royal Commission appointed by Mundella in 1882 commented, "the best preparation for technical study is a good modern secondary school... unfortunately our middle classes are at a great disadvantage compared with those of the Continent for want of a sufficient number of such schools" Quoted, W.H.G. Armytage, Four Hundred Years of English Education, 169.

Curzon echoed that view in India, rather more pungently, with his remark "To start with Polytechnics, and so on, is like presenting a naked man with a top-hat when what he wants is a pair of trousers." Quoted David Dilks Curzon in India, I, 244.

2. Armytage, 178.

quite in line with the movement of public opinion in England.

"From the earliest days of British rule in India private enterprise has played a great part in the promotion of both English and vernacular education, and every agency that could be induced to help in the work of imparting sound instruction has always been welcomed by the State .... The progressive devolution of primary, secondary and collegiate education upon private enterprise, and the continuous withdrawal of Government from competition therewith, was recommended by the Education Commission of 1883 and the advice had been generally acted upon. But, while accepting this policy, the Government of India at the same time recognise the extreme importance of the principle that, in each branch of education, Government should maintain a limited number of institutions, both as models for private enterprise to follow and in order to uphold a high standard of education. In withdrawing from direct management, it is further essential that the Government should retain a general control, by means of official inspection, over all public educational institutions."<sup>1</sup> Control was thus necessary to check the inefficient private schools and to improve the condition of the existing schools. This double policy could only be attempted by laying down stricter conditions of recognition, by vigorously implementing them with the help of a strong Inspectorate, and by a much larger provision of funds for grants-in-aid.

The Indian Universities Commission of 1902, most of whose recommendations formed the basis of the Education Resolution of 1904 and the Universities Act of 1904, tried to solve the problem of recognition of schools by recommending that the power of recognition should be transferred from the universities to the Departments of Public Instruction.<sup>2</sup> In a note of dissent to the majority opinion in the Commission's Report, Gooroodas Banerjee, argued that to give the departments the power of recognizing schools which they did not aid would amount to an unjustified

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1. Quoted Sadler Report, I, 95-6.

2. Raleigh Commission Report, I, 20.

interference with the freedom of private enterprise. While admitting that the universities, which did not possess an independent machinery of their own for assessing the performance of schools, would have to depend on the departmental inspectors for information, Banerjee nevertheless felt that recognition power should lie with the universities. The Indian National Congress and the popular press also joined in the denunciation of the Commission's proposal on similar grounds.<sup>1</sup>

The Government of India were divided on this question. A.T. Arundel, T. Raleigh and J.P. Hewett, all members of the Council, supported the Commission's view. H.H. Risley, the Home Secretary and H.W. Orange, the Director-General of Education, Government of India, in a joint note argued that recognition of schools was as much a function of Government as the admission of colleges to the privilege of affiliation. Government was even more intimately concerned with the recognition of schools than was the University, since Government provided for the inspection of schools, supervised their working minutely and gave them grants-in-aid. To Risley and Orange it seemed inconsistent with the performance of these functions that the important duty of recognition should devolve upon the universities. So they suggested that the universities should recognise only such schools as were certified by the appropriate Education Department to have complied with the regulations for recognition framed by the university and approved by Government.<sup>2</sup> In spite of this forceful recommendation, Curzon and his Home Member Denzil Ibbetson accepted Gooroodas Banerjee's proposal. Accordingly the Indian Universities Act of 1904, empowered the Senates to prescribe the "conditions to be complied with by schools desiring recognition for the purpose of sending up pupils as candidates for the matriculation examination."<sup>3</sup> The conditions a school had to fulfill were : that it was

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1. GI-Home Edn., A.67-86, Dec. 1903. See, for example, Kayastha Samachar VI, 1902, 188-192; 217-28.

2. Ibid.

3. Indian Universities Act., 1904, Sections 2 (2) (b) and 25 (2) (0).

actually needed in the area; that its financial stability was secure; that it had a properly constituted managing body; that it had adequate provision for the instruction, health, recreation and discipline of pupils; that the teachers were of suitable character, number and qualification; and that the new school did not undercut existing schools by charging lower fees.<sup>1</sup>

In Bengal the process of considering and implementing these suggestions and requirements was taken up as part of the process of framing university regulations in which Asutosh Mookerjee, as Vice-Chancellor, played so notable a role. The regulations proposed by the committee over which he presided were very far from according with the views of Government. The Committee argued that if the University was entitled to prescribe the conditions to be complied with by schools desiring recognition, it ought to be the final judge in deciding whether the prescribed conditions had been complied with. Asutosh claimed that this indeed had been the practice, which had worked smoothly because of the harmonious relation between the Education Department and the University. The existing schools were to be reformed - hundreds of them were unaided - they would resent any interference from anybody except the University. He argued that, rightly or wrongly, a decision by the University regarding school recognition or de-recognition would command much greater confidence than a similar decision by an Inspector or a Director of Public Instruction. On the whole this procedure, he claimed, had "the merit of proceeding on the line of least resistance...."<sup>2</sup>

H.W. Orange, the Director General of Education, found these proposals quite inadmissible "as their effect, if sanctioned, would be by a side wind to revolutionise our present system of control by Government of the schools... and to vest it in the Syndicate, conferring upon them powers of control in some respects concurrent with, and in other respects superior to,

1. Indian Educational Policy Resolution, 1904.

2. Asutosh, Note GI-Home, Edn., A98-99 Sept. 1906. Para 22.

those of the local governments ...."<sup>1</sup>

Orange also did not set much store by Asutosh's claim of existing good relations between the Department and the University. He quoted Alexander Pedlar, the Bengal Director of Public Instruction, as saying that because of the University's policy of recognising schools against the advice of the Government Inspectors standards in schools had gone down in the last twenty years.<sup>2</sup> Orange, like Pedlar, therefore demanded "some real voice in the recognition of high schools" for the Government and the Education Department.

This time Orange found himself alone because H.H. Risley, who a few months earlier had been instrumental in appointing Asutosh as the Vice-Chancellor of Calcutta University, agreed with Asutosh on school recognition. He envisaged no "practical difficulty whatever in working the new regulations if the University and the Department continue to co-operate as may be expected with the Director of Public Instruction, an ex-officio member of the Syndicate, and educational experts strongly represented on it."<sup>3</sup> Risley based his opinion on both political and educational grounds. At this time the Swadeshi agitation was daily gaining in strength, and Asutosh's appointment, strongly backed by Risley, was intended to rally moderate opinion to the side of a hard-pressed Government. Bampfylde Fuller, the headstrong Lieutenant-Governor of the new province and Henry Sharp, his DPI, had succeeded in alienating the Hindus there, while R.W. Carlyle, Chief Secretary to the Bengal Government, by his circular requiring schools to curb student indiscipline, had roused the rest of Bengal. Under these circumstances the Government of India could not afford to ignore the recommendations of Asutosh, their chosen man at the University.<sup>4</sup> Politically, any attempt on the part of the Department to exercise control

1. Orange, Note, 24 July 1906. Ibid.

2. Ibid.

3. Risley, Note, 31 July 1906, Ibid.

4. A. Basu, 32-59.



over unaided schools would be associated with Bampfylde Fuller's policy and with the Carlyle circular. "Indeed our only hope of doing anything to put down political agitation by school boys and teachers lies in the co-operation with the University." A.T. Arundel was not sorry "to see the attention of the native press diverted from Swadeshim, and the partition and Sir B. Fuller, to healthier topics of education."

Thus supported the Asutosh committee's views were accepted. The resolution of the Government of India approving the Regulations observed "under the regulations now sanctioned the recognition or non-recognition of a school will be the act of the University, and the functions of the Education Department or of the person nominated by the Syndicate to report on the claims of the school to recognition will be limited to placing before the University the information requisite to enable it to exercise its controlling authority .... The Governor-General-in-Council is assured that its (Calcutta University's) influence will be firmly and discreetly exercised in the direction of checking the spirit of licence and self-assertion, the unbecoming manners, the impatience of control, and the disregard of all authority which have been displayed of late by boys and masters of not a few schools in Bengal and the new Province (Eastern Bengal and Assam)".<sup>1</sup>

In 1906, when these new regulations came into force, Calcutta University had approximately 600 High Schools under its jurisdiction. Fully half of these 600 schools had started their lives under private management and had never been subjected to inspection either by Government or by any other body. Under the new regulations the University was given the power to inspect all of them and it "proceeded in right earnest to discharge the new responsibility which had devolved upon it".<sup>2</sup> Each school was given a fixed time within which to comply with the conditions imposed upon it and the schools tried their best to implement the regulations

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1. Resolution No.600, 11 Aug 1906. GI-Home,Edn., A 98-99 Sept 1906.

2. Sadler Report, I,296.

of the University. "But it was obviously impossible for a considerable proportion of these schools, situated as many of them were in backward localities, to effect radical improvements without periodical grants from public funds."<sup>1</sup> The Bengal Government drew up a scheme to help these schools, but could not carry it out for lack of funds. Improvements in secondary schools involved great expenditure. Government could not increase its grants-in-aid and the University had neither the funds nor the machinery for efficient and frequent inspection of the schools scattered all over Bengal.

The Department of Education had the responsibility of inspecting all the schools - government and private, both aided and unaided. The five divisions of Bengal had one Divisional Inspector each for the purpose of inspecting both the High and Middle English Schools. It was his duty to submit a report on the High Schools of the division to the University, which might or might not accept it, and to distribute grants to the aided schools in accordance with departmental rules and regulations. The courses of study for the two top classes of the High Schools were prescribed by the University while the Department of Education controlled those of the lower classes. After the Universities Commission's Report was published the Bengal Government asked the Government of India to strengthen the higher inspecting staff in Bengal. Particularly they wanted to raise the number of European Inspectors of Schools from six to fourteen. (Currently there were eleven Inspectors - six Europeans belonging to the Indian Education Service and five Indians who belonged to the Provincial Education Service.)<sup>2</sup> The decision to appoint European and Indian Inspectors in almost equal proportion had been taken in 1896 although

1. Sadler Report, I, 297.

2. Orange, Note, 8 April 1905. GI-Home-Edn., A 48-56, Dec. 1905.

it has been recommended even earlier by the Indian Education Commission of 1882.<sup>1</sup> Both the Bengal and India Governments were in agreement, however, regarding the need for a large infusion of European elements into the Bengal Inspectorate. The officials were convinced that the Inspectorate was "most notably weak in Bengal ". From an educational point of view H.H. Risley wholeheartedly agreed with Orange. An analysis of the weak points of the Indian Inspectors as listed by Risley will show the way British opinion ran. The Indian Inspectors, said Risley, were reluctant to find fault; they tended to be satisfied with mere paper results; they were liable to be got at by headmasters and managing committees, which was inevitable in view of the family and caste connections between educated Bengalis; they tended to shirk travelling.<sup>2</sup> These defects made them a less capable agency; more Europeans were needed "to afford a corrective to the reports of the native agency so that the only chance of carrying out the reforms now contemplated is to be found in a large increase in the number of European Inspectors ... none of the reforms will ever begin to succeed without the best European agency to start them and carry them on ".<sup>3</sup>

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1. In 1881, Bengal had five Circle Inspectors of whom one was Indian and four were Europeans. The Education Commission recommended that "native gentlemen of approved qualifications (be) eligible for the post of Inspector of Schools" and that they should be appointed in larger number than had been the case. The Public Service Commission of 1886 also recommended that the recruitment of Inspectors from Europe should be considerably reduced, inasmuch as local agency might be substituted for them without loss of efficiency. The Government of India did not accept this recommendation as regards Bengal. They insisted that there should be as a rule three Europeans and two native Inspectors and a protracted correspondence ensued between the Governments of Bengal and India on the one hand and the Secretary of State for India on the other, in which the Government of India consistently opposed proposals either to reduce the number of Inspectors or to diminish the number of Europeans so employed. In the end a fifty-fifty proportion was decided on.

GI-Home Edn., A48-56, Dec 1905.

Orange, Note, 4 June 1903. GI-Edn., A 47, Nov 1903.

2. Risley, Note, April 1905. GI-Edn., A 48 - 56 Dec 1905.

3. Risley, marginal comment, 4 June 1903. GI-Edn., A 47 Nov 1903.

But however much the Government desired to strengthen the European element in the Inspectorate political expediency triumphed over mere educational requirement. From the 1880's onwards it had been established policy to Indianise a substantial proportion of the superior grades of the Education Department and in the case of the Inspectorate the tendency had been to aim at equality. Denzil Ibbetson, the Home Member in 1903, described the dilemma of the Government. While agreeing to the proposal to strengthen the European element on its educational merits he went on to say "education is not the only matter, or even the most important matter, in which we have deliberately decided, on political grounds, to accept a substantial proportion of inferior native agency in the superior grades. On the other hand the natives will urge that, of all the branches of the administration, the educational is the branch in which he is most advanced. and least behind the Englishman ... he will be able to quote the Public Service Commission to that effect. If we take the old "examination" and book work standard of education, he is probably right. If we take the wider standards which we are endeavouring to adopt, he is certainly wrong; but for that very reason, he will not appreciate the distinction."<sup>1</sup> The Governments of India and Bengal continued to press for a larger Inspectorate, the latter proposing, indeed, to add eight more Europeans. This Orange, the Director-General of Education, strongly supported : in the absence of European teachers in Bengal schools the dozen European Inspectors would be "the sole agency which the department will have to bring to bear upon the 2,500 secondary and 53,000 primary schools "<sup>2</sup> But in view of questions about the progress of Indianisation asked both in the Imperial Legislative Council and in Parliament, Risley chose to moderate Bengal's

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1. Ibbetson, Note, 12 June 1903. GI-Edn., A 47, Nov 1903.

2. Orange, Note, 8 April 1905. GI-Edn., A 48-56, Dec 1905.

demands before transmitting them to London. By mid-May 1905 he had reneged altogether and was urging equality in new appointments, on political grounds.<sup>1</sup> Since the Secretary of State was unwilling to commit the sums asked for, Bengal was told that India would not supply the necessary funds - which effectively squashed all hope of an enlarged Inspectorate.<sup>2</sup>

Thus the departmental machinery remained inadequate, while the hope that the reconstituted University would exercise a firmer control over unaided schools proved chimerical also. The system of dual control by the University and Department devised in 1904 broke down under the pressure of increasing demand for secondary education in the second decade of the century. At the same time control of schools became more difficult and politically explosive because the Swadeshi movement drew so much of its support from schoolboys and also from teachers. Government attempts to control lawlessness in schools, as by Carlyle's circular requiring heads of schools and colleges to aid District Officers in watching Swadeshi staff and students, only aggravated the problem.<sup>3</sup> Attempts by the new Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam to involve the University in its struggle with rebellious schools only led to the resignation of Bampfylde Fuller.<sup>4</sup> In more than one case the University proved anything but a willing ally, allowing students expelled for indiscipline from one school to join another, contrary, it seemed, to regulations. To Eastern Bengal this action of the Syndicate seemed "clearly to override the authority of the Education Department in respect of recognised schools and to assume a right of appeal and revision over the Director of Public Instruction ...."<sup>5</sup>

1. Risley, Note, 11 May 1905. GI-Edn., A 48-56, Dec 1905.

2. Orange, Note, 13 May 1905. Ibid. For six additional European IES Inspectors there would be an initial outlay of Rs.4,500 passage money and a recurring cost of Rs.99,456 a year - a twenty per cent increase in the cost of the whole inspecting staff of about four hundred. 12 Oct 1905. Ibid.

3. The circular was issued by the Government of Bengal on 10 Oct. 1905.

4. N.K. Sinha, 71-73.

5. D.O. H 1a Mesurier to Sir H. Stuart, 27 Jan 1910. GI-Home-Edn., A6 March 1910.

Earlier, in 1907, the Government of India had attempted to prevent just that sort of conflict by issuing a circular, to replace Carlyle's, which allotted separate spheres of control to the local governments and the University.<sup>1</sup> By 1910 it felt that it should take powers itself to check the rise of anti-British activities without involving the University. What the Home Department proposed amounted to a virtual licensing of all schools and their teachers by the local governments.<sup>2</sup> However the inauguration in the Government of India of a separate Department of Education under Harcourt Butler required a more favourable atmosphere than such a proposal would have created, and it was therefore shelved for the time being.<sup>3</sup> Instead Butler opted for the carrot of larger imperial grants for education.<sup>4</sup>

In the meantime unaided schools, which were the most difficult to control, multiplied all over Bengal. Except in the United States, in Canada and perhaps in Japan, said Sadler, there was nothing comparable to the eagerness for secondary education shown by the Bengali middle classes. During the five years 1912-1917, for example, the number of secondary schools of all types in Bengal rose by 19 per cent and the number of pupils in them by 33 per cent.<sup>5</sup> This growth rate was not

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1. Circular, 4 May 1907. GI-Home-Edn., A 76-79 June 1907. W.W. Hornell, then Assistant DPI, Bengal (he became Director 1913-24) noted the peculiar susceptibility of the Bengali student to external influences: he "is not an innocent babe ... but under the ordinary conditions of his upbringing occasions do not present themselves in his early life which force him to realise the effects of his actions. ... at home he is adored and petted by everyone, especially the women of the house, whom he is probably taught to despise. When he goes to school there are no difficulties to overcome. .... The idea of a boy being fit to face responsibilities at the age of 16 or 17 is never seriously entertained by his parents." Irresponsibility, Hornell concluded was a consequence of the lack in Bengal of those public schools where English boys find a code of social and individual ethics which, though not foolproof, teaches them hard work and self-discipline. Hornell, Note, 17 March 1907. GI-Home-Edn., A 76-79, June 1907.

2. GI-Edn., A 89, Dec 1913.

3. Ibid.

4. Butler to Hardinge, 22 June 1911. Butler Papers, Eur.F. 116/47.

5. Sadler Report, I, 195.

totally outside European experience, but it was wholly disproportionate to the growth in the number of pupils attending elementary schools, more than a quarter of that figure.<sup>1</sup> Moreover whereas in the West increased demand for education had followed from a great expansion of trade, industry and commerce, in Bengal there had been no such expansion. Rather it was increasing economic pressure upon the literate castes, in desperate competition for a narrow range of service employment, which called these secondary schools into existence.

To the growth of unaided secondary schools neither the commercial nor industrial classes added much.<sup>2</sup> And though Bengal was predominantly agrarian, the great bulk of its people deriving their livelihood directly or indirectly from the land, significant demand for education was not generated by the needs of its agrarian economy. The great Bengal zamindars never played anything like the part played by English landlords who provided a significant element in the public schools and universities. Nor did they attempt to develop their estates by applying the mechanical, scientific, large-scale methods of western agriculture. They did not, therefore, have any demand for scientific education to make. ? As for the peasants who actually tilled the soil, the great majority of the Bengali population, many of these were low-caste or untouchable Hindus or 'low-caste', usually illiterate Muslims for both of whom secondary education was unthinkable. Only in the early years of the century when jute prices boomed was there clear evidence of some peasants sending a son to school or college in search of respectability and a service or professional career. Secondary education was still very largely the preserve of the bhadralok, and it was their demand for cheap

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1. BQR, 1912-13 to 1916-17, Gen. Table III, VIII-IX

2. The great disparity in educational attainment between classes is brought out by a social survey of the wards of Calcutta in 1917 undertaken by the ADPI, T.O.D. Dunn. He used his officials to categorise the social structure of the wards and then set this information against the state of educational provision.

High Schools which led to the proliferation of unaided schools. They passionately believed that even a bad school was better than no school. Expansion of educational provision was an article of faith with them.

It was the same bhadralok class, however, which had come to dominate the governing bodies of the University, particularly the Syndicate. Long training in the politics of criticism and opposition without responsibility, and ingrained distrust of the educational policies of Government made them reject the Government's insistence on quality rather than on quantity, and unready to accept the critical reports of Government Inspectors upon schools. "In the name of efficiency," they believed, the Department of Education had "not allowed a legitimate expansion of primary and secondary education in the country." The Department had grown "too aristocratic, too expensive, too efficiency maniac to suit us any more," to the point where it regarded any substantial increase in numbers, either of schools or students "as a thing almost verging on indecency." And because of the "poverty of India" nationalist critics argued, the departmental insistence on "costly and complicated standards", on elaborate buildings, equipment and inspection, was against all commonsense.<sup>1</sup>

The Inspectors of the schools were all government employees and their reports, although treated with consideration, were not always acted upon. The way in which this attitude of the University helped newly started schools which were seeking recognition was noted by the Inspector of Rajshahi Division: "Recognition has become cheap and shows a tendency to become cheaper still. An impression is gaining ground that it may be had for the asking, seeing that cases are very rare in which it has been refused." "Often than not, recommendations of inspecting

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1. Speech by Bhavendra Chandra Ray on resolution for setting up an advisory board for secondary education. BLCR, 4 Sept 1917, 755. As an example of criticism of the Department, The Beharee, reviewing Bengal education in 1913-14, wrote "... the primary duty of Government is to remove illiteracy.... That comes first and ought to be the first item on the programme; only after it comes better paid teachers or the construction of more sheds, model or otherwise." Quoted in The Modern Review, June 1915, 649.



officers of the Department carry little or no weight."<sup>1</sup> In any case, the only weapons which the University could use against a defaulting school, old or new, were limited to "good advice, which most of the schools cannot afford to follow; warnings, which the recalcitrants have safely disregarded; and, in the last resort, withdrawal of recognition which would in most cases lead to the closing of the school and thus to the forfeiture of educational facilities by the district concerned."<sup>2</sup>

There was another no less compelling reason which induced the University to be circumspect in demanding higher standards from the schools. More schools meant more candidates for the Matriculation examination, bringing more money in the form of examination fees into the coffers of the University. From its early days a very large part of the University's income used to come from the fees paid by the candidates for various university examinations and since candidates for the Matriculation examination always far outnumbered the candidates for all other examinations taken together they naturally constituted a very cherished source of income for the University. The University regularly made handsome profits out of this matriculation fees business.<sup>3</sup>

Thus the University was neither able nor willing to exercise a

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1. BOR, 1917-1922, 31.

2. Sadler Report, I, 301.

3. A look at one year's fee receipts of the University may be a good guide.

Income from examination fees 1925-26		expenditure on that examination:
Matriculation	Rs. 285,000	Rs. 81,000
Intermediate	Rs. 258,000	Rs. 63,000
B.A; B.Sc; B.Com.	Rs. 168,000	Rs. 43,000
Masters	40,000	Rs. 13,000
Medical	50,990	Rs. 46,000
Law	141,600	Rs. 21,500
Ph.D. & D.Sc.	1,400	Rs. 2,100
Teacher's Training	50,900	Rs. 46,000
Engineering	3,340	Rs. 4,800

Source : Calcutta Review, March 1926, 535.

restraining influence on the growth of secondary schools - during the ten years from 1911-12 to 1921-22 their number rose from 1,528 to 2,563.<sup>1</sup> This was significant in view of the fact that the new regulations entrusting the University with the power of recognising schools came partially into operation in 1908. The Bengal Government was not happy: there was concern about "this abundance of English schools ", about the inefficiency of the system, about the bad quality of the instruction, which only too often produced "a partially educated malcontent, of little use either to himself or to society ". The Bengal District Administration Committee Report had no doubt about the relation between the system of education and terrorism in Bengal during the first two decades of this century.<sup>2</sup>

That relationship they saw as arising from the very particular nature of bhadralok society and the equally distinctive educational structure in the province. In no respect, the Committee said, did conditions in Bengal differ more widely from those obtaining elsewhere in India than in respect of the Anglo-Vernacular schools. In other provinces these were found almost entirely in towns and at district headquarters; in Bengal they

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1. This 68% rise in the number of secondary schools (105% by 1931) was not caused by any dramatic growth in population, which in Bengal rose as follows: 1901-40 million; 1911-45 million; 1921-47 million; 1931-50 million. (The really big jump by 10 million, occurs between 1931 and 1941.) But whereas in the twenty years 1911 to 1931 total population grew by 13% and bhadralok population by 35%, the number of schools grew by 68% and of pupils by 128%. Most dramatically of all the numbers of males literate in English which in 1911 had been, bhadralok 250,299 and non-bhadralok 124,812, by 1931 was 401,727 and 960,396 respectively - an almost exact reversal in proportion as well as a roughly eight-fold absolute increase.

Sources : BQR 1916-17-1921-22, II, Special Table 2; BQR 1932-37, I Table 4 : Census of India, Bengal, 1911 Part II, Table XVI; Census of India, Bengal, 1931, Part I, Table XIV: Census of India, 1941, I Part I, 62-4.

2. Bengal District Administration Committee Report, 139, 151

This committee was appointed by the Government of Bengal on the suggestion of Craddock, Home Member of the Government of India, to look into the weaknesses of the local administration and their political consequences.

abounded even in the most rural areas. Elsewhere they were established with government or local board funds, here they were mainly founded by private effort. Elsewhere government control was effective, in Bengal, in deference to the recommendations of the 1882 Education Commission, an attitude had been adopted of practical non-interference in private enterprise.<sup>1</sup> That enterprise had produced astounding results. In Eastern Bengal, in the districts of Mymensingh, Dacca and Bakarganj which in spite of difficult communications were probably the wealthiest and certainly the most populous in India, there were both a larger number of bhadralok and a greater concentration of secondary schools than anywhere else to be found. One revenue thana of the Munshiganj sub-division of Dacca district supported an entirely rural population of 2,996 to the square mile, and though without a single municipal town, it also contained 23 High Schools, with an average of 300 pupils in each, 12 Middle Schools and 592 Primary Schools, all in an area of only 386 square miles. Moreover, though Munshiganj was the most developed area of the three districts, even the relatively backward southern sub-divisions of Bakarganj contained from 600 to 800 primary schools each.<sup>2</sup> In contrast, the whole of the United Provinces could boast of only fourteen High and fifteen Middle English schools away from district headquarters. None were large and five of the High and four of the Middle Schools were maintained by government or local funds.<sup>3</sup>

In Bengal the system of secondary education was one to whose growth and support Government had contributed little. Anglo-Vernacular schools in the province arose and multiplied despite the lack of, and not because of government support. Privately managed schools had long outnumbered state schools. In 1916-17, for example, there were 2,207 private secondary schools to 93 state managed schools in Bengal, and of the total cost 87% came from fees and private contributions, and only 13% from

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1. Bengal District Administration Committee Report, 51.

2. Ibid.

3. Bengal District Administration Committee Report, 139.

government sources.<sup>1</sup> Since of that 13% governmental share a major portion went on government run schools, the money available for grants-in-aid to private schools was small indeed. Nevertheless the grants-in-aid represented the chief instrument of control which was available to Government in seeking to impose its views on the constitution of school management committees, on teachers' salaries and so on school accommodation levels. The presence of District Magistrates and Sub-Divisional Officers as presidents of school management committees gave some leverage, but with only Rs 436,173 to distribute in grants-in-aid to secondary schools over the whole province - and this included the contribution from the centre - the pressure exerted was slight. Quite clearly Government could not spread its net to cover all the private schools in Bengal: even with nearly half the secondary schools in the province outside the aid network, the average per year for each aided school was only about Rs 180<sup>2</sup>

The unaided schools were entirely independent. For many of them it was a precarious existence, but the majority did manage to exist without any grant from the government. Although they followed the departmental curricula and rules regarding promotion, examination, and transfer of pupils they were not, in the remotest degree, subject to any direct government control. The unaided schools constituted a virtual terra incognita so far as the Department of Education was concerned, for it was to the University of Calcutta, which held the fate of these schools in its own hands, that the government Inspectors submitted their reports on these schools. But as one of them pointed out, "Recognition in fact is considered to be the ultimate goal in the career of a school, and all incentive to improvement disappears as soon as it is obtained, for the authorities of the school are pretty sure that, once granted, it will never be snatched away. When the truth is told by an inspector, and when

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1. BQR, 1912-13 to 1916-17, 31.

2. Ibid., 32.

his criticism happens to be unfavourable, an outcry is raised that the Department is out to annihilate higher education."<sup>1</sup> So the private, unaided schools, which constituted the majority of all secondary schools, could go their own way - the University both unwilling and unable to do much and the government though very willing, lacking the requisite funds to do anything better.

This uncontrolled growth of schools and of secondary education was a sign of the intelligence and of the political and social aspirations of the Bengali people, the Committee declared, of their enterprise and willingness "to put their hands into their pockets to secure educational advantages."<sup>2</sup> The proliferation was also due to the dominant influence of Calcutta, "the most Europeanised city in the east", and one "to which all paths of advancement are considered to lead", for the English educated at least. Many among the Bengali clerical classes who sought and found their employment in Calcutta chose to leave their families behind them in their villages. For the education of their children they therefore started Anglo-Vernacular schools even in the villages and in the mufassal towns.<sup>3</sup>

Such an extensive knowledge of English, the Committee felt, was likely to produce some degree of social and political unrest among an intelligent people. The likelihood of that happening would be much increased if the rewards of English education failed to match expectations. By 1915 that was just beginning to occur. The Committee noted the abundance of pleaders and lawyers in the mufassal towns of Bengal. In Mymensingh district there were 403 pleaders and barristers, 384 mukhtars and 96 revenue agents - nearly 300 in the district town itself - and as yet all but a few expected to make a living, thanks to the complexity of land tenures and the activity of the lawyers' touts.<sup>4</sup> Again, the Committee argued that the English educated could still find posts in the district offices.<sup>5</sup> But they

1. BQR, 1916-17 to 1921-22, 32.

2. Bengal District Administration Committee Report, 139.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid., 53.

5. Ibid., 163.

concluded that though "the educational product, be its quality what it may, has not so far outrun its market .. the class of occupation ... is still far too largely clerical ... and the newly-awakened enthusiasm for education among other than the clerkly castes and especially among Muslims, gives rise to grave misgivings" - given that "in no country in the world can there be found such an entire absence of truly industrial employment, with so elaborate a system of education."<sup>1</sup> Already the jobs available, though sufficient in quantity, did not always satisfy the bhadraloks' white-collar, social expectations. Many young men, the Committee commented, rate the value of School or College English education much higher than does the average employer,<sup>2</sup> and the undergraduate is very reluctant to serve away from the town. Even the unsuccessful feel that "the mere fact of their English education places them well above the performance of manual labour."<sup>3</sup>

Disappointment and dissatisfaction could be given a political twist: "Only a certain portion of the English knowing classes fail in obtaining adequate employment, but too many see in the foreigner an economic foe."<sup>4</sup> And what appeared to the Committee to be unusual and unnatural was "the particularly sinister and prominent part" taken by Bengal schools and colleges in the terrorist movement, educated people turning into dacoits and robbers; boys leaving their schools to take part in robbery and murder. "All through, the anti-government movement in Bengal has recruited its forces principally from Anglo-Vernacular schools and colleges .... In this it has achieved a wide success ...."<sup>5</sup> There must be something seriously wrong with a system which could produce such a state of affairs:

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1. Bengal District Administration Committee Report, 169. Not everyone agreed that there was sufficient employment, witness the evidence of R. Nathan, Chief Secretary to the Government of Bihar and Orissa, who also stressed the severe pressure exerted by rising prices on bhadralok with fixed rental income and salaries. Ibid., Appendix II, 1 and 2.

2. Ibid., 171, "The number of educated persons drawing from Rs.10 to Rs.30 in small trading concerns, private schools, zamindars' cutcherries and the like must be immense."

3. Ibid., 14.

4. Ibid., 173.

5. Ibid., 4.

"The fact is," observed the Committee, "that the diffusion of English education in Bengal demanded considerably more from government than it received." The crux of the matter, the Committee pointed out, was that "private effort, however meritorious, required careful and attentive steering ...." They cautioned about "the dangers of spreading among an Eastern people a western education, cut down to the lowest possible cost, with no regard to religious training and with little regard to moral training".<sup>1</sup> The committee suggested remedies - more secure government control over all Anglo-Vernacular schools which should be under the control of one authority only, the authority which could help them with money and could with its organised system of inspection and examination guarantee the adequacy of its tests.<sup>2</sup> However, the severest strictures of the Committee were reserved for the teachers, "notorious for the deliberate corruption of youth, who were the conscious agents of a deliberate organised attack on British rule carried on by methods of the basest and most mischievous description". And wondering how persons of such pernicious political antecedents so easily found their way as masters into Anglo-Vernacular schools, the Committee recommended greater government control over the selection of the members of the school managing committees.<sup>3</sup>

The analysis of the problem was clear enough, but reform of secondary education through increased investment, to which that analysis pointed, was rendered impossible by war-time financial stringency. If more resources could not be found then the only other remedy seemed a redeployment of existing resources so as to at least suppress the symptoms of a disease for which more money was the really appropriate medicine. But redeployment was often made impossible by political stringency. A case in point was the overcrowding in schools, particularly in the top two classes, which was regarded

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1. Bengal District Administration Committee Report, 139-144.

2. Ibid., 154.

3. Ibid., 154.

as a major cause of student indiscipline. The true remedy would have been to pay for more teachers and so reduce class sizes. The other, which the District Administration Committee actually recommended was to reduce the number of students allowed to enroll in schools. From this, however, the Bengal Government shied sharply away - it was impossible to suggest such a step to the Calcutta University for fear of political repercussions.<sup>1</sup> P.C.Lyon, Member in charge of education, and W.C. Wordsworth, the Assistant D.P.I, both grudgingly admitted that the demand for English education from "an enormous middle class" was greater than the resources of the country could meet - or the purses of those making the demand. It was impossible, Lyon and Wordsworth felt, to stem the rising tide and equally impossible to secure efficient education "mainly, not wholly - because there are other reasons - because the financial basis of efficiency cannot be secured on the money available."<sup>2</sup> They could see nothing but "to plod along doing our best to improve things here and there."<sup>3</sup>

The financial problem, given that Government contributed so small a share of the total income even of aided schools, was that fees were too low to support a secondary school of high standards. The low fees in Bengal dictated low expenditure - the lowest in India - as the following table makes clear:

Province	Pupils per school 1911-12 a)	Yearly cost per pupil 1911-12 b)	Yearly cost per pupil 1917 c)
Madras	426	Rs 27.0	Rs 29.9
Bombay	321	38.6	45.9
Bengal	258	22.0	21.1
E Bengal and Assam	333	15.2	Assam 25.5
United Provinces	297	43.9	51.5

Sources : a) IQR, 1907-1912, II Table, 68,234; b) Ibid., Table 88,241.  
c) Hartog Report, 103.

1. Lyon, Note, 3 June 1915 and Wordsworth, Note 20 Jan 1916. GB-Gen-Edn., <sup>4-C</sup>/<sub>26</sub> 1-3 A58-61, June 1917. Lyon also argued that the necessary corollary of smaller classes was more schools. D.O. to GI, 27 June 1916 GB-Gen-Edn., 8-R B153-154, Aug 1916. 21

2. Hornell, Note, 22 March 1916. GB-Gen-Edn., <sup>4-C</sup>/<sub>26</sub> 1-3, A58-61 June 1917.

3. Wordsworth, Note, 20 Jan 1916. Ibid.



In 1918 the Department therefore examined the possibility of raising the school fees, but this too they rejected as impracticable. Fees in government schools were as a rule higher than in the private schools. In the top two classes of the Hindu and Hare schools in Calcutta, both Government run, the fees were Rs 4 a month. But in other schools they were not much lower, Rs 3-8 annas down to Rs 2-8 annas, since in private schools fees were the most important and for unaided schools virtually the only source of income.<sup>1</sup> Hornell, the Bengal DPI, recognised that since fees in schools had risen considerably between 1907 and 1917 they could not again be raised at this time.<sup>2</sup> In any case, so Wordsworth argued, parents paid a reasonable share of their income in the education of their children.<sup>3</sup> Poverty was the real problem. However the Department did begin to enforce the principle in case of aided schools that no grant would be given unless a certain fee rate was charged.<sup>4</sup>

Another approach had long been toyed with - that of using the recognition of schools as an instrument of control and improvement. As has been seen, by the Education Act of 1904 the universities had been allowed to take to themselves the power of recognising schools. All but Madras did so by their regulations. But the general pattern was of acceptance of the Education Department's Inspectors as the universities' instruments in the vetting of applications for recognition. There was again one exception - this time that of Calcutta University, which required schools to apply directly to the Syndicate, and which thereafter chose either to conduct its enquiries through the Inspectors or by others deputed for the purpose.<sup>5</sup> In Bombay and in the

1. T.O.D. Dunn, Report, Feb 1918. GB-Gen-Edn., IE-2, A1-10, April 1919. The low income which low fees yielded led to low standards. In 1927 the percentage of trained teachers on school staffs, 78% in Madras, 75% in the Punjab, 68% in the CP, 32% in Bihar and Orissa was 12% in Bengal. Hartog Report, 115.

2. Hornell, D.O. to O'Malley, 28 April 1917. GB-Gen-Edn., <sup>4-6</sup>/<sub>26</sub> 1-3, A58-61, June 1917.

3. Wordsworth, Note, 20 Jan 1916. Ibid.

4. Hornell, D.O. to O'Malley, 28 April 1917. Ibid. In the same way from 1918 a uniform Rs 6 a month fee was imposed on almost all Government Colleges.

5. IGR, 1907 - 1912, I, 74.

United Provinces, the Government through its Inspectors was the real recognising agent, and there because the School Final examination, which was departmental, was gaining ground at the expense of the University-organised matriculation examination, its authority was growing.

Allahabad University did not deal directly with schools and certainly "would not dream of interfering in internal discipline". Public opinion, it was reported, was not sufficiently developed to take much interest in the issue of school recognition, and the Syndicate accepted the Inspectors' reports on schools, which were processed by an enquiry committee of which the DPI was chairman.<sup>1</sup> In Madras, of course, the Government recognised the schools, both by regulation and in fact. The system had worked well, the Department felt.<sup>2</sup> When the Department of Education of the Government of India consulted the provincial Directors and Education Secretaries all in principle agreed that the power of recognition ought to rest with the Department and not the University.<sup>3</sup> But only in the case of Bengal was the issue a really live one. It was Bengal which held that it would be far better if Government had the formal power to recognise schools.<sup>4</sup> The university authorities had betrayed the trust which, against the deliberate advice of the Indian Universities Commission, had been placed in them in regard to schools, had opposed the local government, and had "virtually declared themselves in favour of indiscipline and inefficiency. The case is overwhelming."<sup>5</sup> The Bengal Government further contended that "the assumption by the University of a position of independent, if not of revisional authority in face of the Education Department regarding matters of internal management, and their apparent tendency to interfere with, or

1. Sharp, Note, 19 Dec. 1911. GI-Edn., A 6-7, Feb 1912.

2. Sharp, Note, 16 Jan 1912. Ibid.

3. Sharp, Note, 19 Dec 1911. Ibid.

4. Ibid. Sharp here quotes Kuchler, DPI, Bengal.

5. Sharp, Note, 28 Nov 1911. GI-Edn., A 6-7, Feb 1912.

weaken the effect of disciplinary measures taken by the Department ", could not but obstruct the Government in its exercise of control over schools.<sup>1</sup>

The University on the other hand asserted that the Syndicate would not surrender the privilege which they had exercised for many years of dictating to recognised schools even in matters of internal discipline. The University went further - it would not even be prepared, it said, to substitute for direct interference by the University a reference to the local government.<sup>2</sup>

Notwithstanding this opposition from the University, the Bengal Government, prompted by the Government of India, prepared in early 1913 a statement drawn up on the basis of a report of the Criminal Investigation Department showing the participation in political agitation of students of schools and colleges. They discovered, in Eastern Bengal "a widespread organisation of a political character" one of whose main aims was "to capture the organisation of higher education in its earlier stages, more particularly the Middle and High English schools, and thus introduce to the colleges of the Presidency youths whose minds are well prepared for the growth of anarchical doctrines."<sup>3</sup> In June the Bengal Government held a conference of officials to review both the statement and the discussions within the Government of India about the licensing of schools, of teachers, or of both, as a means of controlling sedition. Bengal rejected the licensing of schools as neither desirable nor necessary, and sought to take school authorities into its confidence and not to do anything which would alienate them. What it did propose was to modify grant-in-aid rules so as to allow only approved persons as teachers in aided schools and to seek the transfer, by Government of India legislative action, of the power to recognise schools from the University to the Government so that unaided schools could be controlled.<sup>4</sup>

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1. G E B and A to GI, 17 Nov. 1911. GI-Edn., A 6-7, Feb 1912.

2. Ibid. The discussion of the recognition issue between Nov.1911 and Jan.1912 flowed from the assembly of the Secretaries and DPI's in Delhi for the Coronation Durbar.

3. GB to GI, 5 June 1913. GI-Edn., A 84-88, Dec 1913.

4. Sharp, Note, 12 June 1913. Ibid.

The Government of India considered Bengal's proposal to take school authorities into its confidence as to the intended disciplinary steps to be useless. "The (management) committees," noted Henry Sharp, "even if well-meaning, are hopelessly dilatory and lenient, when not well-meaning, are cleverly obstructive."<sup>1</sup> However they accepted Bengal's main recommendation regarding transfer of the power of recognition and they therefore included it in the 1913 Resolution on Indian Education Policy. A Bill was drafted to amend the 1904 Act, proposing to make registration compulsory for all schools, government or private, aided or unaided.<sup>2</sup> A School Board, to be formed by the local government would recognise, license or close schools.<sup>3</sup> Offending schools or teachers would be punished by law. But Lord Crewe, the Secretary of State for India, whose sanction was necessary for the introduction of the Bill in the Imperial Legislative Assembly had reservation<sup>S</sup> about it. He was apprehensive of Indian opposition and felt that it was liable to abuse. He, therefore, advised Hardinge to consult the Bengal Government and Calcutta University before introducing the Bill in the Assembly and warned him of the expected opposition from the educated classes.<sup>4</sup> The consultation which followed took more than a year - the Bengal Government, mindful of the public hostility to a transfer of recognition, pointed out the desirability of avoiding hurried action. It felt that time was on its side and public opinion was gradually moving in the direction of the desired change. Government therefore should place before the public its complete scheme of reform and gain public confidence.<sup>5</sup> The

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1. Sharp, Note, 12 June 1913. GI-Edn., A84-88, Dec 1913.

2. Government schools were also included in the proposal because it was felt that it would silence much opposition if all schools were brought under the Act. Butler, Note, GI-Edn., A 89, Dec 1913.

3. Ibid. Syed Ali Imam, Law Member, objected to the proposal in the draft despatch that all members of the Board should be nominated. When official majorities had disappeared at municipal, district and provincial Legislative Council levels an official Board was unacceptable. Butler persuaded him however that the non-official element on the Board would be "really effective."

4. Telegram from SS to VR, 18 Dec 1914. Judicial Proceedings 704/1914, W.4853/1913 Vol.1882, 1913.

5. GB-Gen-Edn., I U/16, A 37-39, Jan 1914.

University for its part recounted all the familiar arguments against a transfer. It demanded that it should continue to recognise schools since the Matriculation examination was designed as a test of fitness for entrance to the University - a bland assumption that the true aim of secondary education was to prepare pupils for the Matriculation examination conducted by the University, totally neglectful of the many boys who did not pass on to a university career. But however purblind in its assumptions the University might be, it was vigorously supported by the press in Bengal which launched a powerful attack on the new educational policy enunciated in the 1913 policy Resolution on Education and the proposed Bill to transfer school recognition from the University to the Department. The Bengalee sounded an explicit warning : "If the new educational policy is persevered in, it will create irritation, plunge the country once again into the throes of a great agitation, and interrupt the great work upon which the Viceroy has set his heart ... the spirit of co-operation will be checked ...."<sup>1</sup> "All Bengal ", according to the Sanjivani, "will emphatically protest against this proposal to bring high schools wholly under the control of the Education Department."<sup>2</sup> This measure, it was feared, was designed to restrict the facilities for higher education by reducing the number of High Schools. "The dangerous over-activity of the new fangled Education Department of the Government of India" and its confrontation with Calcutta University had become an all-absorbing topic among educated Indians.<sup>3</sup> The non-official members of the Bengal Legislative Council, in a memorandum to the

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1. The Bengalee - 1 July 1913.

2. The Sanjivani - 10 July 1913. 'All Bengal' did protest, at a great meeting at Calcutta Town Hall on 28 July 1913, Surendranath Banerjee moving a resolution against a transfer of recognition, supported by Motilal Ghosh, Najumuddin Ahmed and Kazim Ali. Another resolution moved by Ambica Charan Mazumdar protested against proposals for a School Final examination, which would partially replace Matriculation. See Modern Review, Aug. 1913.

3. The Bengalee - 1 July 1913 and 17 Sept. 1913.

Viceroy, protested against the proposals. Surendranath Banerjee, moving his resolution on school recognition in the Imperial Legislative Council on 6 January 1914, gave powerful expression to the fears and prejudices of the Bengali Hindus. "Next to religion," he said, "education is our most sacred concern. It touches our deepest instincts."

"The Senate, like all public bodies, deliberates in public, decides in public, and although largely official in its constitution and personnel, it decides with the aid of popular representatives. Nor is this all, it decides on grounds that are purely educational."<sup>1</sup> If this power were transferred to the Department what would happen? Banerjee, in his answer, voiced the concern of the Hindus: "Every government, whatever else it may be, is unquestionably a political organisation, and every Department of Government ... partakes of a political flavour." "... in times of excitement the fate of our institutions would be determined by political and, I was going to add, by police considerations. It is a matter of common knowledge that in the height of the excitement in Eastern Bengal some of our educational institutions escaped disaffiliation through the saving power of the Senate."<sup>2</sup> It was largely on the threat held out by Surendranath Banerjee and his paper the Bengalee that the Indian Government decided to defer legislation.<sup>3</sup> That deferment was to last for the duration of the war.

Thus the problem of controlling and reforming Secondary Schools remained unresolved. Meanwhile, the Calcutta University Commission, appointed in 1917, was making out a strong case both for reform and for the provision of ample funds to carry it out. They recognised and appreciated the growing desire of the Bengalis, particularly the middle classes, for higher and secondary education. But what distressed the Commission was the particularly narrow aim of the whole system of secondary education - that of passing the Matriculation examination. The schools thought only of the Matriculation

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1. GI-Edn., B170-171, May 1914.

2. Ibid.

3. GI-Edn., A33-47. Oct 1915.

examination, their success rate was measured in terms of the percentage of passes secured by their students and the schools tried almost religiously to perform what the rules of the matriculation prescribed. "Thus a perverted and uninspiring view of higher education has become general", the Commission declared. "The desire for education, though it springs from needs which good schools can alone satisfy, is perverted into a demand for what a school must deteriorate in consenting to give. But the pressure is irresistible, and the schools in yielding to it are spoiled."<sup>1</sup>

And what caused the pressure? "The explanation", said the Commission, "is found in the very limited range of careers open to educated young Indians, in the value of a knowledge of English to those who enter such careers, and in the disproportionate degree of importance which is consequently attached to recognised certificates of literary attainment."<sup>2</sup> In Bengal, a schoolboy's career was made or marred at matriculation because the matriculation certificate was the first step on the road to economic security and social respectability by way of a university degree. Failure to obtain a degree meant failure in life, for a career in industry, trade or commerce, in the army or navy were all for one reason or another less accessible to <sup>a</sup> Bengali than to an English boy. And in Bengal, for the higher branches of the professions and of government, a degree was indispensable.

Thus it was mainly economic pressure which lay at the root of the all-absorbing anxiety on the part of the average student to pass his school examinations. This was repeatedly avowed by witnesses before the Commission. Purna Chandra Kundu saw the prospect of earning a decent living, not concern for learning and intellectual progress, as the usual incentive to higher education.<sup>3</sup> Another witness, the Rev. W.E.S. Holland, Principal of the

1. Sadler Report, I, 265.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid., VIII, 130.

Serampore Missionary College, wrote in passionate terms : "The poverty of these classes is intense. It is the determining factor of higher education in Bengal; a poverty of which every principal has heart-breaking evidence. Education is in the nature of a family investment, to enable the recipient to feed and maintain a crowd of dependent relatives. Hunger not for learning or development of faculties, but for bread and butter is the motive behind our students. Most tell you with perfect naiveté that they only wish to learn enough of their subject to pass in their examination, and then to have done with it for ever."<sup>1</sup> This economic pressure also existed, the Commission admitted, in other countries: In all the modern universities of Britain there were hundreds of students to whom the bread and butter side of education was of the utmost importance. But that did not mean the general closing of the ears and mind to everything that did not contribute to examination success.

This domination of Matriculation affected the secondary schools in a number of ways. It lowered the standard of instruction in schools by encouraging recourse to "keys," cramming and private tuition of the pupils. It stereotyped instruction and destroyed the teacher. "The engine of examination," said Holland, "crushes the heart out of the teacher and student alike. The teacher who is tempted to lead out his pupils' interests along some engaging line of study knows he is wronging them; for the time so spent may mean failure in examination."<sup>2</sup> More generally, Nayak complained, it was socially destructive: "Ninety-nine per cent of Bengalis who learn English do it simply to earn money. This sort of giving and receiving education with the most sordid motive has given rise to a community, the Babu community as it is called, to which money is the be-all and end-all of life, a community in which the high-born and low-born are equally placed, and where license and want of restraint is the rule of conduct."<sup>3</sup> The pressure

1. Sadler Report, VIII, 106.

2. Ibid. Holland quoted an advertisement for one such 'key': "Perusal of the pages of this brief booklet will make study of the university text-books unnecessary."

3. Nayak, 7 Jan 1914.



to pass had also affected the University, too, for there were widespread accusations that the Calcutta Matriculation standard was falling. With this the Sadler Commission tended to agree. The Matriculation, they held, did not distinguish sufficiently between exceptional and average merit among the successful candidates. It allowed a very considerable number of ill-educated candidates to pass. There was in Calcutta University "a leniency sometime neglecting the grave responsibility of the university to the public and tending to class the less with the more deserving students ...."<sup>1</sup> The standard for Matriculation was undoubtedly too low, especially in English and Mathematics.<sup>2</sup> And whether standards had been lowered in recent years or not, from a comparison of the percentage of first class passes awarded it was clear that "the requirements of the Calcutta University for a first division at Matriculation and a first class at the Intermediate examination must be markedly different from those of other Indian universities."<sup>3</sup>

The Commission as a body refused to say whether standards had been lowered: J.W. Gregory in a note of dissent was emphatic that they had. He admitted the difficulty of inter-University comparisons, though he quoted many expert witnesses in his support, but he showed that the percentage of candidates who passed the Calcutta Matriculation had risen from 26.2 per cent in 1906 to 78.8 per cent in 1910 and 73.2 per cent in 1913; and that the percentage of passes in 1917, 70.1 per cent was to be compared with a rate of 34.7 per cent at Bombay or 27 per cent at Allahabad. The figures spoke for themselves.<sup>4</sup>

1. Sadler Report, II, 225.

2. Ibid., V, 7.

3. Ibid., In 1918 the percentage of candidates in the first division at Matriculation was 58 at Calcutta, 0.4 at Allahabad, 11.3 in the Punjab and 38.4. at Patna. Sadler Report, II, 198-9.

4. Ibid., 400-404. It will be noted that the rise in the percentage of passes and of first division results coincided with the Vice-Chancellorship of Asutosh Mookerjee. He certainly believed that to facilitate the rapid expansion of higher education question papers should be made easier and paper setters were accordingly advised to keep the average student in mind. (He himself was a paper setter for English and Mathematics) Examiners were asked to be more liberal, a wider choice of questions was offered and more options in the selection of subjects to be taken. But his conscience was clear. Answering critics who accused him of lowering the standard of the Calcutta Matriculation he said, "I do not accept that the really meritorious students have suffered. But even if there is a deterioration in standards can anyone deny that education has spread far and wide?" See Moni Bagchi, Siksha Guru Asutosh (Asutosh as an Educationist), 98-100.

Another aspect of secondary education much in need of reform was the narrowness which beset it, the result partly of poverty of resource, partly of narrowness of employment opportunities, partly of the cramping influence of the Matriculation examination. A large number of private schools were run chiefly for profit, as business ventures. Many of them were badly housed, badly staffed and most serious of all, said the Commission, ill equipped for the formation of character of their students.<sup>1</sup> The Commission were guarded in their condemnation of private enterprise, but while recognising "the need for the zeal and independent effort" of private schools and teachers they maintained that in Bengal commercialism had weakened and discredited it. Private enterprise could function efficiently where there were large endowments or where high fees could be charged, or if these were lacking, with large subsidies from the public purse.<sup>2</sup> But too often proprietors syphoned off all funds beyond what had to be spent for the mere survival of the school. By exploiting the "large and ignorant demand for education of any kind, however bad", the proprietors could run their schools at the lowest limit of efficiency without suffering any loss of students. Parents did not understand - and therefore could not demand - such necessary parts of education as a disciplined social life, good physical conditions, good libraries and laboratories or a reasonable standard of work in the classes.<sup>3</sup> Above all, the schools were preoccupied with providing only certain types of knowledge, dictated by Matriculation requirements. A good secondary education system should serve three purposes, it was argued: to prepare an intellectual elite capable of making original contributions to science and the arts; to train those who will enter the liberal professions and the public service; and to provide a liberal and practical training for those who will find employment in business, industry

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1. Sadler Report, I, 237.

2. Ibid., 226.

3. Ibid., 224-25. For an account of a venture school of the worst kind see the appendix to this chapter.

or agriculture, immediately or after further training. The needs of these three different groups of pupils were different – but for all three a liberal education of varying duration was necessary, while a knowledge of English, if not absolutely necessary, was at least highly desirable.<sup>1</sup>

These needs the secondary schools of Bengal failed to meet – their curricula offered no variety of choice to the students, there was no provision for science except Mechanics and the too bookish, literary system prevented many technically inclined boys from finding their true line. An analysis of the subjects taken by students in fifty three secondary schools in Calcutta during 1917 – 1918 showed the extent of the domination of linguistic studies over the secondary curricula. For Matriculation candidates took four compulsory subjects, English, Mathematics, a classical and a vernacular language, plus two additional subjects from among History, Geography, Mechanics or a further paper in Mathematics or the chosen classical language. The structure of the examination was in itself heavily weighted towards linguistic studies. The pattern of teaching and of student choice, as the pattern in the fifty three schools demonstrates, was even more so.

Compulsory subjects taught

English	in 53 schools
Mathematics	53
Bengali	52
Sanskrit	53
Arabic	6
Persian	17
Pali	3
Hindi	3
Urdu	10

Additional subjects taken

Sanskrit	in 50 schools
History	53
Mathematics	52
Geography	35
Mechanics	11
Persian	10
Arabic	6
Pali	3

Source : GB-Gen-Edn., IE-2, A1-10, April 1919.

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1. Evidence of Surendranath Das Gupta, Chittagong College and comments of the Sadler Commission. Sadler Report, I, 283.

The popular course was to take Bengali, English, Sanskrit and Mathematics from the compulsory subjects and for the additional subjects to select Mathematics and Sanskrit or History. Secondary education was thus literary in character and literary in an academic way. Government service occupied the top place in the list of choices given by three hundred school-boys questioned by the Calcutta University Commission, followed by the medical, legal and trading professions.<sup>1</sup> Commenting on this state of affairs, Naresh Chandra Sengupta, Vice-Principal of Dacca Law College and a leading Bengali author of the period, wrote "The educational system has no reference to our social and economic ends. The result is that the mere passing of the examination and perhaps so qualifying oneself for Government or private service, for which a university qualification is a sine qua-non, becomes the end of education. This aimlessness of education is reflected in the wonderful combination of subjects which are offered by candidates for examination - subjects which have no possible relation with one another .... To remedy this defect, I think it would be necessary to diversify the courses and adapt them with special reference to particular careers - the career of a scholar being only one of these."<sup>2</sup>

There had, indeed, been some half-hearted attempts at diversification of the secondary school curriculum. As far back as 1884, the Report of the Education Commission had recommended a bifurcation of secondary school courses so as to enable boys to study practical subjects as well as literary courses. The Commission suggested that in the upper classes of

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1. Sadler Report, I, 284. 33 per cent wished to join government service, 18.6 per cent preferred medicine, 12.8 per cent law, 10.8 per cent opted for business careers; 6.1 per cent for engineering and only 4.7 per cent wanted to be teachers. 2.4 per cent wished to follow a calling connected with land - the remainder (10.8) were uncertain.

2. Sadler Report, VIII, 182. Another well known Bengali scientist, Meghnad Saha made a similar point regarding the popular concept of secondary schools whose chief function was "to pump into their (students') minds a working knowledge of English, a little knowledge of a classical language and vernacular .... In our country education reaches the people through a narrow slit - a certain minimum of efficiency in the use of English."  
Sadler Report, XI, 41-42.

High Schools there should be two divisions: one leading to the Matriculation examination, the other of a more practical character intended to fit youths for commercial or non-literary pursuits.<sup>1</sup> This recommendation was given effect to in the year 1900 - special classes, called the B classes, were started in a number of schools to give some manual and other practical training for the calling of an engineer. These classes were parallel to the Matriculation classes, but the boys in them were not eligible as candidates for the University Matriculation, nor were they able to enter the higher classes in engineering - they were limited to the apprentice classes. Given some recognition in the form of a certificate, education of this type (liberal but not too literary) might have become more successful. As it was the B classes failed to catch the imagination of the Bengal middle classes; the lure of the Matriculation certificate and a University degree proved too strong. Every Bengali father recognised that by making his son follow the B course he was sacrificing the boy's chance of becoming a High Court Judge or a Deputy Magistrate and offering him instead the prospect of perhaps a Sub-overseership in the Public Works Department. Parents were naturally reluctant to start their off-spring in the race of life with so heavy a handicap. Usually those who entered the B classes had not been doing well at school and were not likely to pass the Matriculation examination.<sup>2</sup> So between 1912 and 1917 half the B classes closed for lack of students.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Report of the Indian Education Commission, 1883 - 1884, I, 220-221 and 883-84. Referring to the above recommendation of the Education Commission, Charles Tawney, the then Director of Public Instruction, wrote in 1886, "the only way to make technical education really popular is to induce the Calcutta University to take it up". - Review of Education in India, with special reference to the Report of the Education Commission, by Alfred Croft, Director of Public Instruction, Bengal, 181.

2. F.J. Monahan, Commissioner, Rajshahi to GEB and A, 20 Oct 1911. GB-Gen-Edn., 6E-11, A35-56 July 1913.

3. BQR, 1912-1917, I, 78.

Improvement by diversification at the secondary level was hampered, as the Quinquennial Report noted, by the lack of any exciting prospect on the industrial or commercial side. By this date European firms were well entrenched in Bengal and the Marwaris increasingly powerful - there were comparatively few Bengali entrepreneurs to foster the growth of practical and scientific skills by their patronage. European firms were racially prejudiced against Indians, except for unskilled or semi-skilled jobs, so Bagchi argues, and Government, on the railways, in public works, in the ordnance factories was scarcely less so, until as late as the 1930s.<sup>1</sup> There was thus a vicious circle of lack of training and science education in the schools and of suitable jobs to which trained boys might aspire. Reform and change within the schools was desirable, but for full effect depended on wider economic and social change too.

If the B classes were short lived, plans for ~~for~~ a School Final Examination in Bengal, which should terminate secondary schooling for all those not going on to the University, were still-born. Conceived in 1883 by the Education Commission as an alternative, under Education Department administration, to the University-managed Matriculation examination, it was intended to allow great variety in a curriculum no longer geared to university entrance requirements.<sup>2</sup> Similar suggestions were made by the Simla conference of 1901 and the Universities Commission of 1902. The latter

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1. A.K. Bagchi, Private Investment in India, 1900-1939, 150-56.

Shifts in ~~bhadralok~~ employment patterns are brought out by the census figures for the Baidya caste in Bengal.

	<u>1911</u>	<u>1921</u>	<u>1931</u>
Physicians	215	190	189
Public Force	n a	13	21
Public Administration	82	72	85
Clerks, cashiers etc	n a	74	81
Arts and Professions	103	116	123
Trade	n a	53	58
Transport	38	34	31
Mining	1	5	7
Industry	6	25	47

Sources : Census of India, Bengal, V, pt II 362-77; V, 429; V pt II, Table XI.

2. Indian Education Commission Report, 1883-1884, I, 220-21 and 254.

also proposed to make the Matriculation a test of fitness only for admission into the University and not for government service, proposed that the School Final examination should also be accepted as sufficient for entry into the University.<sup>1</sup> And although the 1904 Resolution spoke in the same vein, Government, while approving the new university regulations, did not press the point for fear of rousing opposition to the proposal as a further step "in the direction of officialising education with the object of restricting the openings of the poor scholars and reducing the output of English educated men"<sup>2</sup>.

From then on the Governments of India and of Bengal had intermittently reiterated their position on the need for a School Leaving in place of the Matriculation examination. The 1913 policy resolution mentioned it, but the proposal was drowned in the ensuing chorus of public denunciation. Meanwhile it had been introduced in other parts of India, notably Madras, where it began to make headway. In Bengal, the District Administration Committee in their report in 1914, vigorously advocated the case for such an examination. Goaded into action by this report, the Government of Bengal in March 1917 submitted to the Government of India a tentative scheme for a School Final examination,<sup>3</sup> prepared by the Director, which was to be fully worked out by a Board appointed for the purpose. Calcutta University would then be asked to recognise the examination as qualifying for admission to colleges. But the Government of India without further ado vetoed the proposal, using as excuse the imminent Sadler Commission enquiry into higher education in Bengal. This infuriated Bengal - Hornell, the Director, accusing the Government of India of "an attack of cold feet", saw that "the rock on which the courage" of the Government of India had foundered was their view that it was necessary for the success of such an examination that it should be recognised as equivalent to Matriculation for entry into university. The Government appeared to think, Hornell wrote, that Bengal educational policy

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1. Indian Universities Commission Report, 1902, Para 170.

2. G.I - Edn., A127-146, June 1907.

3. GB-Edn., - 65 1-3, A1-3, July 1917.  
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was solely intended to clip the wings of the University.<sup>1</sup> There was dismay that the Bengal Government's "first practical proposal to dispute the tyranny of the Matriculation, and so to raise the general standard of intelligence, was met by the assumption that the secondary school problem was nothing more than the problem of the method of entry into the University ". Henry Wheeler, the Member in charge of Bengal education wanted to make another representation to rebut the "general criticism that the stagnation in educational progress is solely due to our remissness...."<sup>2</sup> Ronaldshay agreed, noting "The practice of snubbing the Government of Bengal when they send up practical proposals and then railing against them in general terms for doing nothing is rapidly becoming a hobby with the Government of India."<sup>3</sup> But nothing was done. Large numbers of boys in secondary schools continued to drift, buoyed up with no more than a vague hope of landing up in government service. The school course leading to Matriculation looked purposeful, the choice of careers on the part of the boys seemed settled enough. But in reality secondary education for most boys was ill directed and their hopes illusory.

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1. Hornell, Note, 17 May 1917. GB-Edn.,  $\frac{6E}{12}$  1-3, A1-3, July 1917.

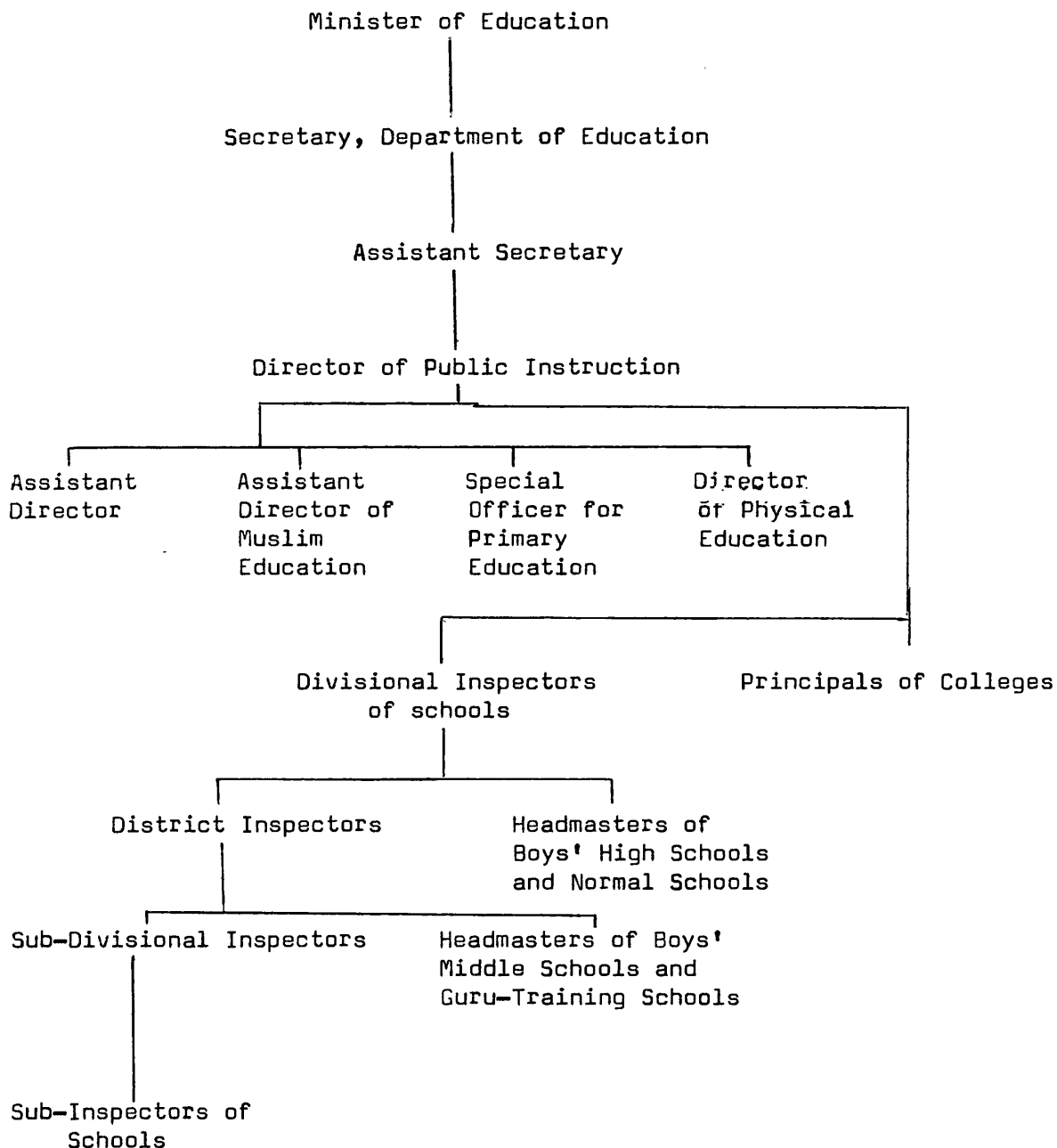
2. Wheeler, Note, 28 May 1917. Ibid.

3. Ronaldshay, Note, 1 June 1917. Ibid.



# Administrative Machinery of the Department of Education

Bengal: 1920 - 1937



#### CHAPTER IV

Many of the proposals hitherto considered had been not for root and branch reform but for adjustment and modification of an existing system. Even the limited changes proposed had often been reduced in scope because of financial stringency, and educational objectives had been subordinated to political ends. The analysis offered and recommendations put up by the Calcutta University Commission, the Sadler Commission, were very different. They passionately believed that Bengal needed not only more education but also a new spirit and a new outlook, supported by ample provision of funds. Coming from outside India, with direct experience of the refashioning of secondary education in England since the Act of 1902, (in which Sadler had played a distinctive part) the English members of the Commission had a fresh vision and offered radical solutions.

To make possible a new departure not only more education was needed, but also a new spirit and a new outlook, in education, supported by ample provision of funds. To make this possible, they called for a thorough overhauling of the entire organisation of secondary education. They proposed the setting up of a new body to be called the Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education entrusted with the responsibility of control and management of secondary education. They were convinced that by sanctioning the university regulations of 1906 (under the Act of 1904) the Government of India deliberately placed on the University heavy and far-reaching responsibilities for the welfare of secondary education in Bengal. This was a task which no university could do properly. However, the Government realised that though the policy had later turned out to be ill-advised, nevertheless it had public opinion behind it. Popular opinion preferred that the University rather than any other public authority should have the power of recognising schools.<sup>1</sup> Fully aware of popular suspicion of government control of education, the Commission cautioned against any

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1. Sadler Report, I, 309-14.

plan of educational reform which would transfer to the Education Department the power of recognising schools then exercised by Calcutta University. Such a measure would cause deep resentment and widespread opposition : "The feeling springs ", said the Commission, "from a conviction or it might be truer to say from an instinct, that education should not be controlled in all its vital issues by a bureaucracy, however competent and disinterested, acting in the name of the Government." "In Bengal the University, though closely connected with Government, has wisely been allowed to serve as one of the safety-valves of non-official opinion in educational affairs, and to exert its influence in a wider sphere than the purely academic."<sup>1</sup> The large measure of responsibility for secondary education given to the University was jealously guarded as a guarantee against a monopolistic Government control. This responsibility would not willingly be surrendered except to a new authority more representative of public opinion than the Department of Education or even than the University itself. Proposals for a transfer to the Department had come to be associated in popular imagination "with designs unfavourable to the wider diffusion of educational opportunities" - a suspicion met with in other parts of India but nowhere more deep-rooted than in Bengal.<sup>2</sup>

The proposed Board would have the sole responsibility for organising and developing secondary and intermediate education in Bengal. Upon it would devolve a replanning, as part of the work of the schools, of the two years of intermediate education currently given in the colleges. That replanning would take account of the variety of needs in the students while for those going on to university an examination at the end of the Intermediate stage would provide a much clearer indication of maturity and ability than could the Matriculation examination taken two years earlier. The Board's role would thus be a crucial one. The Commission therefore made it a consistent

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1. Sadler Report, IV, 31.

2. Ibid.

and prime aim to make the Board representative of all the interests that constituted Bengali society. They placed the highest importance on securing an effective and balanced representation of Hindus and Muslims on it. Muslim apprehension regarding popular representation stemmed from their familiar distrust of the electoral system as it then existed in Bengal - one which was weighted in favour of the Hindu upper and middle classes.<sup>1</sup> The Commission were understanding of Muslim fears and sympathetic to their educational aspirations and needs. They recognised their backwardness in education as a community, appreciated their difficulties, agreed that their educational tradition required special attention and that they were entitled to exceptional encouragement.<sup>2</sup> The Commission was equally concerned that the Board should have a non-official majority<sup>3</sup> and thus disarm popular suspicion. The Board they suggested, should consist of a President who was to be a whole-time salaried appointee of the Government of Bengal; the Director of Public Instruction, ex-officio; one member to be elected by the non-official members of the Legislative Council of Bengal; seven representatives appointed by the Universities - five from Calcutta and two from Dacca; five to eight members, appointed by the Government, to be chosen on the basis of their knowledge of education and with a view to having representation, if not otherwise provided for, of agriculture, industry, commerce, medicine, public health, teaching in intermediate and secondary schools, the education of girls and the educational interests of the domiciled community (of Europeans and Anglo-Indians) in Bengal. Of the fifteen to eighteen members not less than three were to be Hindus and not less than three Muslims and a majority should be non-official.<sup>4</sup>

In its relation with the Government, the Board would be, as the Commission put it, one section of a reorganised Education Department - "a department very

1. See Chapter VII for the communal issue in education.

2. Sadler Report, IV, 39-41.

3. A 'non-official' was defined as some ~~one~~ not in receipt of a salary directly paid by Government.

4. Sadler Report, IV, 38-42.

unlike the present department in its constitution and powers, but much better adapted to the work of enlisting public opinion in the cause of educational progress."<sup>1</sup> The details of administration and expenditure should be left to the Board, but it must be ultimately responsible to the government of the country. Its annual budget estimate should be submitted to the Government which was to provide the bulk of its funds. In the event of a serious disagreement between the Board and the Government the will of the latter would necessarily prevail. But the Commission hoped that their proposed plan of the Board had reduced to a minimum the likelihood of such disagreement. For one thing, the Government had financial control, while another safeguard was that the Board in publishing its regulations would bring them within governmental and public cognisance. In case of a conflict over questions of grave public importance the Government should have the power of overruling the Board, by requiring the resignation of the whole Board, in which case Government <sup>must</sup> justify its action before the Legislative Council.<sup>2</sup> The Commission, in their anxiety to carry public opinion with them, and yet to give the government what appeared to them sufficient control over the Board, had gone as far as was possible to represent but also to reconcile two hostile viewpoints on educational management.

That it was an impossible task became clear after the publication of the Report in 1919. The Senate Committee, which had objected to many of the important recommendations of the Commission regarding collegiate and university education, reacted more favourably to the Commission's proposals for reform of secondary education. The only but crucial objection they raised was that the organisation and control of intermediate classes ought not to be taken out of the hands of the University which should exercise control and supervision through a special Board of Intermediate Education. Further they maintained that the "reorganisation of secondary and intermediate education

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1. Sadler Report, IV, 50. The Commission stressed that there was no analogy with the English Board of Education, which was an official body.

2. Ibid, 52.

should be undertaken not by executive action but by legislation creating the necessary authority or authorities with definite powers and financial resources."<sup>1</sup> They also insisted that such legislation should be undertaken simultaneously with that for the reconstitution of the University - a point emphasised by the Commission. It suited the interests of the University to accept this part of the Commission's recommendation because it was a representative Board that the Commission proposed.

Probably the University also had a shrewd suspicion that the expensive nature of the package of reforms placed it beyond the range of possibility. So they could take a progressive posture and make a virtue of acceptance without any real possibility of hurting their vested interests.

It was the Department of Education of the Government of India which objected strongly to the proposals, their sticking point being the principle of increased popular control in the form of a non-official majority in the proposed Board as envisaged by the Sadler Commission. As we have seen earlier, opinion in the Department as a whole was moving towards an increased rather than lesser state control over all grades of education, especially in Bengal where higher education had already spread far beyond the limits of official acceptance. The Commission's recommendations, therefore, came as a rude shock. In the official mind, as noted earlier, there was a definite co-relation between the extent of state control over education and the absence of political and social unrest. "The measure of control enjoyed by the public over their high schools is much greater in Bengal than in other parts of India", one departmental memo noted, and the authors proceeded to point the moral : in Madras, government control was strong and the High Schools were the best in India, in Bengal there was almost complete autonomy and its schools were the worst. Such schools, far more than the colleges "were apt to fall a prey to the sedition-monger "<sup>2</sup> The officials could not understand the eulogy of Calcutta University in its role as "a safety

1. Report of the Committee appointed by the Senate, May 1920.

2. Sharp, Note, 6 Sept. 1919. GI-Edn. A 47-48, Oct 1919.

valve" for the expression of non-official opinion. The Commission, they felt, had given too much importance to the need for free initiative in education. In trying to create some counterpoise to bureaucratic influence they had destroyed the whole bureaucratic structure of administration. The Commission had proposed to cure the crying evils of secondary education in Bengal, which had grown up "under a system of laissez-faire," through a Board which would be largely independent of Government and which would look for support to, and be considerably swayed by public opinion. Although the Commission knew that "almost unfettered popular control in Bengal has produced one of the most futile and mischievous systems of secondary education which the world has seen, they desire, in effect, to eliminate the Department of Public Instruction and the State...."<sup>1</sup> The Department welcomed the principle of separating Intermediate from University education, but they could not accept a Board the composition of which must entail "a further and sudden relaxation of control, where greater control is admittedly needed ...."<sup>2</sup>

Sharp also deplored that the Commission in assigning large functions to the Board had dismissed the possibility of strengthening the Department so that it could undertake some of them. The Commission proposed that its Board should be responsible for recognising schools, not the University. The Department, too, had long entertained the idea of a Board for this purpose - but an advisory Board, not one armed with administrative powers, which should properly vest in the Department. In any case government institutions should not be controlled by the Board, as Sadler proposed, since it was the government schools "far more than any legislation or rule" which had helped restrain higher education in Bengal from falling into an even worse plight than that in which they found it.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Sharp, Note, 6 Sept 1919. GI-Edn., A 47-48, Oct 1919.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid. The Commission in two very disingenuous paragraphs, had first demonstrated that the Department lacked the manpower and financial resources to carry out the work of the proposed Board and declared that it would be unfair to burden them with duties they could not adequately discharge, and had then gone on to call for the creation of a Board, to be "accompanied by greatly increased expenditure from public funds". Sadler Report, IV, 32-33.

To officialdom in Delhi the majority of the Commission seemed "to have been carried away by the brilliant and forceful exposition of the case by its powerful advocate ...." Sir Michael Sadler.<sup>1</sup> He, said Charles De la Fosse, "stands pre-eminent in English education for variety and freedom from State control ". There he had "preached the doctrine of individualism at all seasons; but ... the idea has become somewhat of an obsession with him", one which could be traced throughout the report.<sup>2</sup> In De la Fosse's view "Not the weakening but the strengthening of Government control over the schools" was the true way forward. This might be "a purely bureaucratic view ... but there is really no alternative. Indian politicians, in their opposition to the present form of Government, are apt to forget that even a Government responsible to the people will have to be master in its own house - unless of course it is replaced by Soviets." George Anderson, Assistant Secretary in the Department of Education of the Government of India, who had acted as the Secretary to the Commission agreed with De la Fosse that Sadler was obsessed. Yet he admitted that Bengal felt very deeply about the issue of school recognition while other provinces cared very little: any attempt to entrust the Department with recognition "would create a storm greater than that at the time of the Rowlatt Act ". The row would not be worth it - a brighter atmosphere was of more value than a better system.<sup>3</sup>

Notwithstanding these private reservations, the Government of India could not in public criticise too strongly the recommendations of a Commission which

1. De la Fosse, Note, 17 July 1919. GI-Edn., A 47-48, Oct 1919.

2. Ibid., De la Fosse was DPI of the United Provinces and had been asked by the Government of India to review the Sadler recommendations. Sadler had been the first Director of the Office of Special Inquiries and Reports set up in 1895 in England to collect information about educational developments in other industrialised countries. He resigned in 1902 - an event to which De la Fosse adverted commenting that the Board of Education in Whitehall would read Sadler's scarcely veiled attack upon it with amusement when it recalled the circumstances in which Sadler had parted company with it.

De la Fosse's Soviets reference was perhaps echoed by Sharp when he closed his Note of 6 September with the comment "The Commission would for all practical purposes, scrap the general staff and substitute for it what is likely to become a Soviet system."

3. Ibid.



they themselves had appointed, moreover, there was the all-important question of funds which, as later became obvious, they wanted to avoid. So, while accepting the Report almost in its entirety, the Government of India took up the position that as secondary and intermediate education could be reorganised by "administrative measures", it should better be dealt with by the Government of Bengal. What they at the centre could do was to undertake legislation to reconstruct the governing bodies of Calcutta University. Thereafter for successive governments "administrative measures" became a useful ploy with which to avoid making any financial commitment or accepting any financial responsibility.<sup>1</sup>

The Government of Bengal in its turn accepted the recommendation of the Commission so far as the powers and functions of the proposed Board were concerned. But in the Board's relation with Government they went further than Delhi by denying it any independent status outside the framework of the Department of Education : "In order to avoid any possible difficulty which might arise from government officers taking orders from a body composed largely of non-officials, it is proposed that they should act under the direction of the Chairman of the Board who would be a salaried officer appointed and paid by government."<sup>2</sup> It was proposed to make the chairman an integral part of the Department, denying him any separate office establishment other than that of the Department, and also denying him direct access to the Minister of Education whom he was to approach only through the Secretary to the Government.<sup>3</sup>

Meanwhile under the constitutional reforms introduced by the Government of India Act of 1919 education had become a transferred subject entrusted to an elected Indian Minister. In consequence the attention of the newly elected Bengal Legislative Council was soon focussed on education, and on reform of secondary education in particular. On 13 July 1921, the Council

1. Resolution, Government of India, 27 Jan 1920, The Indian Annual Register 1920, Part Third, 67.

2. Letter from L.S.S. O'Malley, Secretary, Education Department, Government of Bengal, to the Secretary, Education, Government of India, 17 Jan. 1920. Educational Letters from India, 1921.

3. Ibid.

in a resolution recommended to the Government "the formation of a Board of Education for the superintendence of secondary schools be carried out without delay, and the management of all secondary schools, Government aided and unaided, be placed under their charge, and an adequate grant be made by the Government and placed at the disposal of such Board ...."<sup>1</sup> The mover of this Resolution, Rai Bahadur Jogendra Chandra Ghosh who represented the University, had proposed "to make secondary education national, that is to say, to have it controlled by the representatives of the people."<sup>2</sup> He was prepared to make the Board representative of all the communities but proposed the election of half the members by the graduates of Bengal. His stance was sharply attacked by Surendra Nath Ray who accused Calcutta University of having done nothing to improve secondary education in Bengal - "of late the policy of the University towards schools has rather been a commercial policy."<sup>3</sup> "The Government do not contribute even 20 per cent of the entire cost of secondary education of the province," continued Ray, while "the University ... can contribute nothing. The people of the province contribute about 80 per cent of the cost ... and they have absolutely no voice in the educational affairs of the country."<sup>4</sup> Surendra Nath Mullick, who later became the first non-official Chairman of the Calcutta Corporation, picking up Ray's accusation, charged that Calcutta University by "following commercial methods" in the conduct of the Matriculation examination, and by seeking to make a profit out of it, had lowered the standards of secondary education. Schools had to be "rescued from the paralysing clutches of the University."<sup>5</sup>

The Council resolution forwarded to the Bengal Government accepted nearly all the Sadler proposals, but, significantly, the members of the Legislative Council in all their resolutions, bills and amendments excluded any reference to the reorganisation of Intermediate education under the new Board which the Commission had insisted must be treated as part of any reform of secondary education. This was not the only deviation from the recommendations of the Commission but the major one, though it could be argued that instead

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1. BLCP, 13 July 1921, 554.

2. Ibid., 555.

3. Ibid., 562.

4. Ibid., 563.

5. Ibid., 563.

of dealing with the whole system in terms of teaching and educational aims, the Council only attempted to create an administrative and controlling agency in Bengal. But the Council really had no other choice. The huge expenditure necessary for the reform of secondary and intermediate education as proposed by the Commission was a luxury Bengal could not afford. All the parties involved - the Legislative Council, the Government of Bengal, and the University - knew this stark fact. Under the circumstances creating a new Board was the least expensive part of the Commission's recommendations, one which the Government and the Council could therefore undertake. Calcutta University, for its part, used the cost problem to its own advantage by demanding that the recommendations of the Commissions should be treated as a whole - they should either be carried out altogether or not at all. Until and unless this could be done, the University argued, the schools should remain under its control.

"It is clear ", said the Government, "that this was a claim that could not be admitted by government ",<sup>1</sup> and early in 1923 the Government of Bengal drafted its own Bill for the reorganisation of secondary education. This sought to bring both intermediate and secondary education under one organisation, a Board consisting of a President, to be appointed by the Government, the Director of Public Instruction, Bengal, five elected representatives from Calcutta University and two from Dacca University, and an Inspector, a Headmaster of a school, and a Principal of an Intermediate College, together with five to eight other members all appointed by the Government. The Board would be authorised to control education up to the intermediate stage, to recognise institutions, conduct examinations, distribute grants-in-aid and control inspection of these institutions. The Intermediate examination of the Board

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1. ISC, VIII, 46. He particularly attacked the dominance of Sir Asutosh Mookerjee - "as Sir Rash Behary Ghose once said, in speaking of the Calcutta University Syndicate, the singular number could be more appropriate than the plural".

was to serve as the entrance test for the Universities and neither University was to be allowed to hold any other examination for admission. Any dispute between Board and University would be referred by the Government to a special arbitration board.<sup>1</sup> Calcutta University disapproved of the Bill, attacking it as designed to place the Board under the absolute control of the Government.<sup>2</sup> A series of conferences between the Bengal Government and the University followed, in the course of which both the parties presented their own draft bills.<sup>3</sup> The University, reluctant to hand over control of schools to any other body, tried to retain the proposed Board under its general control. For example, its Bill of 1926 proposed that the Board be called "The Calcutta University Board of Secondary Education". The personnel of the Board were to consist of a President to be appointed by the Senate, in consultation with the Government if he were salaried; the Directors of Public Instruction of Bengal and Assam; four ordinary Fellows of Calcutta University to be elected by the Senate - at least one to be a Muslim; two Principals or teachers of affiliated Colleges; two non-official members of the Bengal Legislative Council nominated by the Council - one a Muslim; one non-official member of the Assam Legislative Council; a member of the Syndicate to be nominated by them; two School-Inspectors - one a Muslim-nominated by the Government; two university teachers and one school teacher to be nominated by the Syndicate - one a Muslim; four other members - two nominated by the Government and two by the Senate to represent special interests; and one Muslim nominated by the Muslim Association. The Senate was to appoint the Secretary of the Board, though in consultation with Government if the post was made a salaried one. The Board would have the power to supervise, inspect and recognise schools and to distribute grants-in-aid. The Government should have the power to interfere only if the Board overstepped its limits.<sup>4</sup>

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1. ISC, VIII, 46. Dacca University since its foundation had used the Intermediate as its entrance examination not Matriculation. As a non-affiliating university, without jurisdiction over schools it played almost no part in the discussions initiated by the Sadler Commission's proposals.

2. Hundred Years, 347.

3. The discussions and drafts which passed between Government and University are not now on file in the West Bengal Archives: the records are marked 'missing'.

4. Calcutta Review - July 1926, 169-172.

Whereas the Government's draft bill had envisaged a Board of whose 17 to 20 members 10 to 13 would be Government officials or Government nominees, together with two representatives of Dacca University who might normally be thought of as allies of Government, all under a Government appointed President, the University proposed that the President be a Senate appointee, and that of the twenty three members six to eight should be officials or Government nominees. Dacca University would be quite unrepresented whereas Assam, the University's ally against the Bengal Government should provide two members. The care to provide for Muslim representation was no less striking and demonstrated a marked shift from earlier years. (See for example the attack in the Bengalee on any communal representation on University bodies, 17 Nov.1922)

The Board thus created would have been just another organ of the Calcutta University. It was to submit all its reports and accounts to the Senate to be forwarded to the Government, and its regulations were to be approved by the Senate. The Senate was given the power to call for information and report, and in extreme cases of disagreement to dissolve the Board by two-thirds majority.<sup>1</sup> The principle underlying these proposals was something far removed from anything recommended by the Sadler Commission regarding the structure of the Board for Intermediate and Secondary Education in Bengal. Obviously the University was prepared to go along with the Commission only in so far as it suited its own narrow interests. This was particularly clear in the University's demand that the proposed Board should deal with High Schools only and that non-collegiate intermediate classes should not be started outside the five mile limits of the Dacca University area and even within that only in a few schools in areas selected and approved by Calcutta University. The supervision and control of intermediate education would thus remain with Calcutta University - together with the fees and patronage thereof. Moreover, so long as the Universities Act of 1904 was in force, the regulations governing the action of the Board should be subject to the approval of the Senate of Calcutta University and confirmation by the Government, as in the case of all regulations of the University.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Calcutta Review - July 1926, 169-172.

2. Ibid.

The proposals of the University, like its objections to the Government's draft, ignored the fact that since 1921 education had been a transferred subject and that in attacking Government control the University was attacking "a popular Government represented by a Minister who depended on a majority in the Council".<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless the Bengal Government went more than half-way to meet the objections raised by the University. The Government Bill of April 1925 had dealt both with secondary and intermediate education and had taken the conduct of the Matriculation examination from the control of Calcutta University and placed the proposed Board under Government control. But under the revised Bill of 1926 the University was to prescribe the necessary standards and text-books for the Matriculation examination, to conduct it, and to realise the fees paid by the candidates for that examination. The Board was to be an independent body with the provision that Government would intervene only under exceptional circumstances. The Board was given the power to supervise secondary schools only, to recognise institutions as qualified, to present candidates for the Matriculation and intermediate examinations and to appoint and control its own inspecting staff.<sup>2</sup>

The Senate appointed a Committee of nineteen members to report on the revised government proposals. The Committee was split. The majority report, from twelve members, objected to the dual control over intermediate education by both the Board and the University and argued in favour of retaining the three functions of recognition of schools, prescribing the curriculum and the conduct of examination under the control of one and the same body. As the Government had already agreed to the principle that the University should conduct the Matriculation examination, therefore, the majority report argued, the Senate should also be given general control over the Board and thus retain under the same authority all the three functions. "If a foreign body with legislative powers were to be created with an executive of its own", the majority report emphasised, "it would be costly and it would be a long time

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1. ISC, VIII, 46.

2. Hundred Years, 349.

before public support and confidence could be spoken for it."<sup>1</sup> When the Senate discussed the Committee's report on 7 August 1926 it was the majority report which was accepted. Once again the University had refused to accept any Board not under its total control.<sup>2</sup> Similarly when officials appointed to review the working of the Dacca Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education proposed that there should be two such Boards for Bengal, the Syndicate countered by demanding a single Board for all Bengal, on which Dacca would be represented - but of course controlled by Calcutta University.<sup>3</sup>

Late in 1928 the Government of Bengal made its last effort to secure a compromise measure. In a draft Bill it allowed intermediate education to remain with the colleges, gave Calcutta University continued control over Matriculation and provided for a single Board for all Bengal. But when it was considered by the Senate on 25 January 1929 this too was rejected - the grounds being that since the President of the Board was to be a salaried Government official, as were the inspecting, clerical and subordinate staffs, and since Government also retained financial control and the ultimate sanction of a veto of any act of the Board which it held to be ultra vires, Government control was "too rigid".<sup>4</sup> After this no further attempt to create a Board for the control and administration of secondary and intermediate education in Bengal was made until 1937 when a new government under the new constitution revived the proposals. Even then success was to prove as elusive as ever.

Lack of funds throughout the Dyarchy period effectively prevented Government from undertaking the reform and reorganisation of the whole system of secondary education on the massive scale recommended by the Calcutta University Commission.<sup>5</sup> What they could do on a limited scale they were

1. Hundred Years, 349-50.

2. Ibid., 350.

3. Ibid., 351 - 52.

4. Ibid., 352.

5. P.C. Mitter as Education Minister in 1923 held that it was futile to start a Secondary Board without money to improve secondary education, but equally he held that the capital expenditure and six lakhs recurring expenditure required by Sadler could not be found. GB-1B2, A72-77, Dec. 1923.  
diture and six lakhs recurring expenditure required  
d. GB-1B2, A72-77, Dec. 1923.

prevented from doing by the determined opposition of Calcutta University and of the Hindu middle classes.<sup>1</sup> Under the circumstances both the Government and the University attempted, within the existing framework, at times singly, at times in co-operation, to remove some of the worst abuses of the system of secondary education. The limited measure of success achieved demonstrated the futility of such actions. Obviously, piecemeal measures of reform by themselves could not go far enough - it was the whole system that needed over-hauling. One case in point was the Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education, Dacca. This Board came into existence in 1921 as a direct result of the terms of the Dacca University Act of 1920 which excluded the Dacca University area from the jurisdiction of both the Universities of Bengal so far as secondary and intermediate education was concerned. Initially, the Board was designed to have a short life since it was expected that a new Board for the whole of Bengal would shortly take over the job. But as this never happened the life of the Board was extended from year to year till the end of British rule.

The Board consisted almost entirely of Government nominees, and in the beginning it had a salaried full-time chairman appointed by the Government, though later the Vice-Chancellor of Dacca University became the ex-officio honorary chairman of the Board. By 1931-32 the Dacca Board's academic control extended over four Intermediate Colleges and fifteen High Schools in the Dacca University area and over three Islamic Intermediate colleges and twenty-seven High Madrassas in Bengal as a whole.<sup>2</sup> But the position of the

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1. The University was not always supported as the right alternative to the Education Department as controller of secondary and intermediate education. The Basumati, 3 August 1927, refused to support either the Government or the University scheme for a secondary Board, denouncing the the University's plan as that of a clique consisting of a batch of beardless youth with a sprinkling of Asutosh's old party. The Amrita Bazar Patrika of 2 August likewise declared a plague on both their houses: Government control would blight educational and national development while the University was riddled with cliquism. Nevertheless the University could be sure that any attack which it made upon Government proposals as too official would be seconded by the bhadralok. Forward voiced their views on 22 December 1928: "secondary education controlled and directed from Dalhousie Square can prove a potent factor in the stabilisation of the Empire, but is sure to prove fatal to the true interests of the country".

2. BQR, 1927-32, 15.

The Board controlled the Intermediate Colleges and High Schools in the Dacca University area together with the Islamic Intermediate Colleges and High Madrassas in Bengal as a whole.



Board was anomalous and, handicapped as it was by the limited area and tenure of life allowed it, it could not create anything new. In the early years of its existence when it attempted to raise standards the pupils took fright and began rapidly to move to schools just outside the five mile radius of the Board's jurisdiction and within that of the University of Calcutta. Haunted by "the fear (by no means a causeless fear) of driving students away from its diminutive area "<sup>1</sup>, the Board gave up any further attempts at raising the standards of its schools and examination. Thus while the percentage of passes at the Matriculation examination of Calcutta University fell steadily during the period 1921 to 1927 those of the Dacca Board after 1922 remained higher than at Calcutta and did not show any similar sustained decrease.

Percentage of pass at Matriculation

<u>Calcutta University</u>		<u>Dacca Board</u>
1921 - 22	78.4	78.2
1922 - 23	73.9	81.0
1923 - 24	75.9	87.4
1924 - 25	72.5	85.6
1925 - 26	56.3	68.2
1926 - 27	52.7	73.6

Source. BQR 1922 - 1923 to 1926 - 27, 46.

To Government in its search for means of improving secondary education two other tactics seemed possible when it became apparent that no major change of structure could be agreed with Calcutta University. One was to use the stick of closure for the least effective schools, the other to try the carrots of grants-in-aid. The second option was always limited by the paucity of educational funds, but especially so after 1929-30 when Bengal was hit by economic recession. There was a disastrous fall in prices, of jute

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1. BQR, 1932-37, I, 24.

in particular, and hence of government revenues.<sup>1</sup> The supply of carrots steadily dwindled.

The position was made more difficult because for most of the period from the war to 1937, growth in the number of schools, and, less markedly, of pupils continued. The beginning of the Dyarchy period witnessed, it is true, a temporary set back in the number of pupils attending secondary schools due to the non-co-operation movement. It was estimated that because of the withdrawal of students the school population was reduced by 22 per cent during 1920-21<sup>2</sup>.

The general trend was, however, upwards once <sup>non-</sup>co-operation had fizzled out :

NUMBER OF SECONDARY SCHOOLS FOR BOYS ACCORDING TO MANAGEMENT

1911 - 1937

High English

Middle English

Middle Vernacular

	<u>Govt.</u>	<u>Aided</u>	<u>Un</u> <u>aided</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Govt.</u>	<u>Aided</u>	<u>Un</u> <u>aided</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Govt.</u>	<u>Aided</u>	<u>Un</u> <u>aided</u>	<u>Total</u>
1911-1912	43	194	156	393	75	537	165	777	108	196	54	358
1916-1917	45	259	394	698	40	885	669	1602	46	274	29	349
1921-1922	44	334	500	878	56	920	492	1468	28	175	14	217
1926-1927	44	473	468	985	50	1140	426	1616	14	55	5	74
1931-1932	45	507	524	1076	51	1275	519	1845	9	40	5	54
1936-1937	45	540	595	1180	44	1436	377	1857	7	31	4	42

Source : BQR 1922-23 to 1926-27 Supplement,

Special Table No 5, p.14 and BQR 1932-1937 Part I, Table No 32, p.56

1. The index number of money incomes of Bengal agriculturalists moved thus :-

1918	139	1924	237	1930	225
1920	237	1926	262	1932	76
1922	220	1928	299	1934	76

Source : N.R. Dasgupta, Sankhya, V, 2, 1941, 227

Income tax yields in Bengal fell from 607 lakhs in 1929-30 to 358 Lakhs in 1933-34, and the Bengal budget moved from a surplus of 2 lakhs in 1929-30 to a deficit of two crores in 1931-32 and remained in the red from 1930-31 until 1936-37.

P.J. Thomas, The Growth of Federal Finance in India, 505 and 519.

2. Calcutta Review, Oct. 1921, 197. The number of boys in High English Schools was 236,000 in 1919-20; 193,000 in 1921-22; 211,000 in 1923-24. See Reports on Public Instruction, Bengal for the three years

Government's concern was to ensure that "progress (such as it was) has been on the right lines and not just a mere expansion of the old pernicious system "<sup>1</sup> From 1925-26, therefore, an additional annual recurring grant of three lakhs, all that the Government could manage to provide, was made available for extending the system of grants-in-aid to private schools.

At this time the DPI had written to the University, on 20 February 1925, urging the University to insist upon written contracts for teachers in private schools, and later in the year the Syndicate adopted a set of rules fixing minimum salaries for Matriculate teachers in High Schools, making the establishment of a Provident Fund a condition of recognition, and setting out a model contract - all embodied in a School Code.<sup>2</sup> The extra cost to schools imposed by the School Code was met in part from the additional government grant of 1925-26. And the sanctioning of the grant for the improvement of teachers' pay was used to lay down certain conditions for its distribution, designed to help only those schools which "deserved to survive" and which, thus helped, would be made "better fitted to survive "<sup>3</sup> The rules laid down were :

- 1) Only a small part of the total grant was to go to Middle English Schools.
- 2) No aid to any school, unless permanency was assured and the school was found necessary in the opinion of the Inspector.
- 3) No new grant to any school with fewer than eleven teachers and a minimum expenditure of Rs 540.
- 4) No grant, old or new, where the rate of fees fell below a certain minimum scale.
- 5) No grant unless a school had a provident fund for teachers.
- 6) The minimum grant to a school to be Rs 100 a month.<sup>4</sup>

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1. ISC, VIII, 33.

2. Hundred Years, 352-53.

3. BQR, 1922-1923 to 1926-27, 50-41.

4. Ibid.

In the quinquennium 1921-22 to 1926-27, to Government's considerable satisfaction, the new policy seemed to produce the hoped-for shift away from uncontrolled, and uncontrollable, unaided private schools to more aided schools. Whereas in 1921-22 the percentage of unaided High English schools was 56.9, in 1926-27 the figure had fallen to 47.5, and over the same period the unaided Middle English schools had fallen from 33.5 to 26.4 per cent of all schools of that category.<sup>1</sup> The goal of securing a more efficient supervision and control over secondary schools appeared to Government to have moved a little nearer. The Seventh Quinquennial Review looking for the factors responsible for the rise in the number and percentage of aided private schools during the quinquennium offered its own explanation : "The time is almost past when a school was regarded as a productive enterprise yielding a regular income to its proprietor. It is competition that has killed the schools as a business concern.... In spite of sweated labour the fee income no longer equals the working cost. For most schools public aid is becoming a necessity - and this necessity knows laws; it provides the opportunity for insistence on a higher standard." And the Review concluded, gratefully, "At last the balance is on the right side".<sup>2</sup>

It had, however, spoken too soon, the trend did not continue. The amount of the Government grant was not large, schools receiving on average less than Rs 130 a month.<sup>3</sup> And while the Bengal Government was running a budget deficit, from 1930-31 to 1936-37, and could scarcely increase its aid, the cost of schools continued to rise, so that the proportion of the aid given to total outgoings fell:

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1. Calculated from Table on Page 200.

2. BQR, 1922-1923 to 1926-1927, 40-41.

3. BQR, 1932 - 1937, 47.

Average monthly outgoings per school, in rupees:

	<u>1922</u>	<u>1927</u>	<u>1932</u>	<u>1937</u>
High Schools	605	705	718	765
Middle English Schools 111		120	130	133

Average cost per head per school, in rupees :

Aided High Schools	35.4	36.2	40.1	37.1
Unaided High Schools	29.3	30.2	27.2	29.9

As costs rose the value of grants-in-aid fell - but since it was only to aided schools that the new rules about provident fund contributions and minimum salaries for teachers applied, the real value of a grant to school proprietors was almost certainly less than appearances would suggest.

Percentage expenditure on High and Middle English schools, by source :

	<u>1922</u>	<u>1927</u>	<u>1932</u>	<u>1937</u>
Government, provincial and local.	18.3	17.9	17.8	15.8
Fees	64.3	65.9	67.4	71.8
others	17.4	16.2	14.8	12.4

As a consequence, after 1927 the proportion of unaided High Schools<sup>1</sup> grew again, not very greatly but appreciably, 47.5% in 1927 to 48.7% in 1932 and to 50.4% in 1937. This was still much less than the proportion had been in 1917 or 1922, but it was the High Schools which Government was most anxious to influence and improve. It was only a partial consolation therefore that of the larger number of Middle English schools, the unaided proportion, after a small upturn in 1932, went sharply down, to 20.3% in 1937. Government had been very hopeful of the grant-in-aid as a carrot: "It would appear that public money, available for secondary education, could not be more usefully spent than in improving and extending the system of grants-in-aid." It had certainly not been without effect, but by itself it provided only a very partial answer to the problem of control and reform.<sup>2</sup>

Government therefore looked also to other measures of control. One of the striking feature of the inter-war years, and of the depression years in

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1. BQR, 1932-1937, 60.

2. BQR, 1922-23 to 1926-27, 48.

particular was that the number of secondary schools in Bengal did not cease to grow, except in the Middle Vernacular category which from 1927 declined dramatically. Of High English schools Bengal by 1935-36 had vastly more than any other province. While there were 10,188 High Schools in Bengal that year there were only 1,099 in Madras, Bombay, the Central Provinces, the United Provinces and Assam put together.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand the average enrolment per school was 411 in the U.P, nearly 400 in Madras and 368 in Bombay but not even 260 in Bengal.<sup>2</sup> The pupil numbers had been very slowly rising it is true, but in the very numerous Middle English schools the figure in 1937 was only 95 pupils per school.<sup>3</sup> It seemed, as the Hartog Report noted in 1929, that whereas normally one would expect to see a growth in the number of schools reflected in a proportionate increase in the number of pupils, in Bengal the saturation point had almost been reached when more schools merely reapportioned the existing pupils among them.<sup>4</sup> In Bengal, Bihar and the Central Provinces the economic limit of school provision appeared to have been reached.

Average increase in number of pupils per additional High School, 1917-1927.

	<u>Additional schools</u>	<u>Additional pupils</u>	<u>Average increase per school</u>
Madras	154	35,483	230
Bombay	65	27,697	426
United Provinces	18	14,980	832
Central Provinces	6	-26	-
Bihar and Orissa	35	3,463	99
Bengal	296	18,107	61

Source : Hartog Report, Table L, 99.

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1. BQR, 1932-1937, 50.

2. Ibid.

3. BQR, 1922-23 to 1926-27, 14 and BQR, 1932-37, 56 and 58.

From 1921-22 the successive quinquennial enrolments had been per Middle English School, 74, 88, 88, 95 and High English School, 217, 237, 238 and 257.

4. Hartog Report, 100.

In those three provinces, Hartog held, the improvement and consolidation of existing High Schools was needed, rather than any increase in their number.<sup>1</sup>

The Eighth Quinquennial Review of the Progress of Education in Bengal, 1926-27 to 1931-32 launched a vigorous attack on the "superfluity of schools" in the province, which it described as one of the "radical vices of the whole system".<sup>2</sup> "While a few of the aided schools are excellent institutions", it asserted, "the existence of larger numbers of private and especially unaided schools over which little effective control is in fact exercised is undoubtedly one of the main reasons for the low standard of the quality of secondary education in the province."<sup>3</sup> There were too many schools - "Neither their numerical strength, nor their location, nor the quality of their general work nor even their results in the Matriculation examination justify the existence of a considerable number of the existing high schools."<sup>4</sup> Public opinion was being prepared for a cut in the number of secondary schools. In a revealing remark it asked whether far more harm than good was not being done by the expansion of secondary education along current lines and whether quality rather than quantity should not be the first principle of any fruitful reconstruction.<sup>5</sup>

That the Government was thinking in terms of reorganisation of the High English Schools became clear when in November 1933 it circulated a Note containing proposals on school reorganisation among the delegates attending an educational conference at Government House. This observed that there were approximately 1200 High English Schools in Bengal, distributed very haphazardly. "The existence of many is precarious; their value doubtful.

1. Hartog Report, 100.

2. BQR, 1927-1932, 43.

3. Ibid., 35.

4. Ibid., 43.

5. Ibid., 44.

The mistaken policy of multiplying institutions without ensuring their academic efficiency or their financial stability, has been disastrous.

It is clear that to attempt to provide facilities for high school education in every village is an impracticable ideal which even the richest countries in the world do not attempt to carry out."<sup>1</sup>

Government believed that "400 schools properly organised and controlled, would ensure far more efficient education than is at present possible."<sup>2</sup>

The word 'control' is a reminder of Government's particular concern for the High Schools as breeding grounds for terrorism and political disaffection.

J.N. Bottomley, the DPI, reviewing at the November conference the problems of secondary education, commented that the conditions in which schools were allowed to flourish rendered discipline of the right sort difficult."<sup>3</sup>

Anderson, Governor of Bengal, had spelt out the problem the previous year in a letter to Sir Samuel Hoare: "You refer to the question of dealing with educational institutions that are known to be mixed up with terrorism... we have been able to tighten up the grant-in-aid rules.... We have also exercised the power of blacklisting an institution, which means that pupils are debarred from any form of Government employment. Unfortunately the power of withdrawing recognition from an educational institution rests with the University of Calcutta and not with the Government."<sup>4</sup> The very thought of reducing the 1200 to 400 High Schools must have inspired dreams of a system purged of all politically disaffected elements.

What was envisaged by Government was a cut in the number of High Schools and together with that a considerable reshaping of the survivors by the pruning away of all attached primary and middle classes (There *were* very good educational reasons for doing this - but the process would also make schools more dependent upon Government."<sup>5</sup>) The average running cost of the

1. GB-Edn., I-U-38 of 1933, B30-87, April 1934.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

4. Anderson to Hoare, 29 Oct. 1932. Templewood Collection, Eur. E 240/19.

5. GB-Edn., I-U-38 of 1933. B30-87, April 1934.



refashioned and improved High Schools would rise to Rs 1175 a month, or just about Rs 400 more than was then usual. Of the Rs 1175, the Note suggested, Rs 675 should come from fees and Rs 500 from Government. On this basis the fees would have to be raised and the possibility for impoverished bhadralok families of securing a 'cut-price' education would be completely closed. At the same time Government would have to contribute Rs 24 lakhs per annum towards the cost, which meant an annual rise of Rs 9 lakhs over and above the existing Government contribution.<sup>1</sup>

These proposals were bitterly criticised in Bengal. "They were", declared Harendra Nath Raichaudhuri, "a direct attack against the existing High School system and stood for curtailing severely the scope and facilities for high school education in Bengal." The ever present suspicion of government control of education found renewed expression and the officials, described as men "who care more for administration than for education and are more concerned in calling the tune than in paying the piper",<sup>2</sup> as usual came in for a good deal of criticism. In sharp contrast with Government's attitude the critics of the proposals maintained that "every true-born Bengalee" took pride in the fact that in secondary education Bengal, of all the Indian provinces, "was the very first, and the rest nowhere".<sup>3</sup> Similarly, "a truly national and responsible government would have felt proud and entertained nothing but the deepest admiration for such popular sacrifice for education".<sup>4</sup>

Nazimuddin, the Education Minister, vigorously defended the proposals. If the standard of secondary education was going down the chief reason was "the multiplication of educational institutions", "... the Government of Bengal is not in a position to make adequate grants to the 1,200 schools in Bengal and the majority of these 1,200 schools have not got an adequate number of students which will make them self-supporting".<sup>5</sup> And challenged by

1. GB-Edn., 1-U-38 of 1933. 830-87 April 1934.

2. Harendra Nath Raichaudhuri, The New Menace to High School Education in Bengal, 109. He was an MLC, Congress spokesman on education, and after Independence Education Minister.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid., 13.

5. BLCP, 21 March 1934.

Dr Naresh Chandra Sengupta - "Can any secondary school be at all self-supporting?"<sup>1</sup> the Minister confidently replied yes - if each school had 400 to 500 pupils and if the total number of schools were small enough for Government to give grants to them all.<sup>2</sup>

Basically, as Nazimuddin and Sengupta both recognised, the problem of control and administrative reform of secondary education in Bengal revolved round the question of money. The complete reorganisation of secondary education along the lines of the Sadler Commission would have required an initial Rs 150 lakhs for capital expenditure and then Rs 80 lakhs of recurring expenditure per year while the total expenditure on education in Bengal in Sadler's day was Rs 340 lakhs, which rose only to Rs 398 lakhs in 1926-1927.<sup>3</sup> Public opinion was no doubt hostile to any increase of government control of education. But given funds adequate to a real reform in the condition of secondary education Government could have gone a long way towards blunting the sharp edges of popular criticism of increased official control. The fact that the people appreciated efficient and well-maintained schools under government control was obvious from the widespread opposition generated by the Government's attempt during the early 20's to deprovincialise the existing government schools. It was under popular pressure that Government abandoned the idea of transferring government schools to private ownership.<sup>4</sup> Money, however, was just what the Bengal Government lacked. In the memorandum submitted by the Bengal Government to the Simon Commission the financial stringency which a static land revenue and the loss of the elastic sources, customs and income-tax, to the centre imposed was very clearly demonstrated, and the inequities of the Meston Award.<sup>5</sup> Then, within a year or two, Bengal was hit by the world depression.

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1. BLCR, 21 March 1934, 417.

2. Ibid.

3. BQR, 1922-23 to 1926-1927, *Supplement*, 68.

4. This had been recommended by the Bengal Retrenchment Committee as an economy measure in 1922. Report, 67.

5. ISC, VIII, 81-86.

The problem which that caused were then compounded by the re-appearance of terrorism and the diversion of funds to combat it. A Retrenchment Committee, like that of 1922 was appointed in 1935, which "tooth-combed all expenditure." A Government resolution on education of 27 July 1935 recorded, "The result has been disastrous. What was bad has become worse and what was tolerable has in many instances become bad. Improvements long meditated and long overdue had to be postponed indefinitely ...."<sup>1</sup> Thus, despite the constant complaint that too many teachers were ill - or un-trained, expenditure on Training Colleges was ruthlessly retrenched.<sup>2</sup> In 1937 Government spent nearly 7 lakhs less on education than in 1927. Moreover within the expenditure on education, which had risen pretty steadily until 1929-30, but then fell sharply and recovered only slowly,<sup>3</sup> there was a shift of resources from secondary towards primary education upon which Muslim dominated ministers directed their attention.<sup>4</sup> Under such circumstances any improvement in secondary education which required an injection of new funds could not be contemplated. The 1933 plan for cutting back, regrouping and more generously financing High English schools was out of the question. And what the public would not accept was that any schools should be closed, even if ill-run and inefficient, in the interests of reform by re-allocation. To the hard-pressed Bengali middle classes almost any education, if it was within their means, was desirable and not to be forgone.

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1. BQR, 1932-37, 2.

2. Ibid., 3.

3. See P.J. Thomas, Appx. F, Table 17, 519. Government expenditure on education in Bengal, 119 Lakhs in 1921-22 rose to 144 lakhs in 1929-30, fell to 126 lakhs in 1932-37, and 1933-34 and was still only 132 lakhs in 1936-37.

4. See Broomfield, 284-288. Expenditure from public sources on university education fell quite sharply, upon secondary education rose modestly, and upon primary education substantially:

	<u>University</u>	<u>Secondary</u>	<u>Primary</u>
1926-27	41,24,000	29,05,000	35,29,000
1931-32	35,74,000	31,94,000	46,18,000
1936-37	33,81,000	32,75,000	50,03,000

Sources : BQR 1922-23 to 1926-27, 136-143; BQR 1927-1932, 150-157;  
BQR 1932-1937, 188-195.

## CHAPTER V

Primary education, as defined by the Indian Education Commission of 1882, was the instruction of the masses through the vernacular in such subjects as would best equip them for their position in life. It was intended to provide them with literacy in the vernacular and with a rudimentary knowledge of arithmetic during a period of school life not exceeding six years and usually confined to four.<sup>1</sup> The primary schools were divided into Lower Primary and Upper Primary - the difference was one of grade - the former containing three and the latter a further two classes. By the turn of the century Bengal had a little over thirty-three thousand primary schools for boys, with more than eight hundred thousand pupils in them<sup>2</sup> - nearly twenty-two per cent of the boys of schoolgoing age.<sup>3</sup> The schools were small, an average of twenty-eight pupils, unevenly distributed, and overwhelmingly private. Only a tiny fraction were under public management, though some four-fifths in 1907 received aid of some sort from public funds. The rest were altogether unaided.<sup>4</sup>

The Management of the primary schools under the scheme of local government reforms of Lord Ripon had been entrusted to the care of local bodies. It was assumed that though primary education was of fundamental importance to the general, national welfare, the promotion and management of such education was nevertheless properly to be left to local enterprise and initiative like any other local service. So primary education was declared to be an obligation of local bodies. Rules were made prescribing the minimum percentage of their income which local bodies must spend on primary education and stipulating that no money might be spent on other grades of education until the claims of primary education had been adequately met. Codes were drawn up under which government grants-in-aid were to be distributed, and since the 1882 Education Commission was eager to involve local bodies and grant them real power, Sub-Inspectors of schools were at one time made employees of the District Boards, the District

1. IQR, 1907-1912, I, 105.

2. BQR, 1902-03 - 1906-07, Suppl.4.

3. IQR, 1902-1907, I, 99. The percentages for other provinces were Bombay 23.5, Madras 20.8, C P and Berar, 14.0, U.P. 7.6 and Punjab 6.1.

4. Ibid., II, 110.

Deputy Inspectors were also made ex-officio members of the Boards in 1890, though they remained government officials. The subordination of the Sub-Inspectors to the Boards did not work, however, for they were given a variety of non-educational work and ceased to be effective instruments of the deputy inspectors, and the scheme was eventually abandoned.<sup>1</sup>

However, the transfer of control to local bodies resulted in a limitation upon rather than encouragement to the expansion of primary education, at least relatively to that of secondary education. Such an outcome was not inevitable. Lord Ripon maintained that the experiment would succeed if adequate resources were made available and if government officers "set themselves to foster sedulously the small beginnings of independent political life and come to realise that the system really opened to them a fairer field for the exercise of administrative and directive energy than the more autocratic system which it superseded." But these important conditions were never satisfied - the local bodies were always short of funds - the transfer of an expensive responsibility such as primary education was not accompanied by the provision of adequate funds.<sup>2</sup> Even the grants-in-aid which, were not to exceed one-third of the total expenditure of a school, were inadequate.

Even in matters of control the powers of the local bodies over primary education were more apparent than real. Their spending from government education grants upon primary schools was on the recommendations of the District Inspectors. If they used their own funds for the purpose it was still in support of schools recognised by the Education Department and inspected by departmental officers. No local body maintained an inspecting

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1. ISC, VIII, 20.

2. The reforms were followed by a period of great financial difficulty with the Indian budget in the red in five of the next ten years.  
Thomas, 496.

staff- not till the nineteen-twenties did the Calcutta Corporation achieve that degree of independence. No changes in the administration or control of grants-in-aid could be introduced by a District Board without government permission.

The curriculum was prescribed by the Department, the text-books were selected from a list published by the DPI, no books, periodicals or newspapers might be bought for the schools by the Board without the sanction of the Commissioner of the Division. No school could be opened, no extension made without the DPI's approval.<sup>1</sup> Of the first decade of the twentieth century Tinker says, "Indian local self-government was still in many ways a democratic facade to an autocratic structure. The actual conduct of business was carried on by district officials, with the non-official members as spectators, or at most critics. No proper system of local management over local affairs had evolved; in particular the English technique of giving elected members a share in everyday administration through the committee system was still at a very elementary stage."<sup>2</sup>

By 1912 there were in Bengal III Municipalities and 25 District Boards with responsibilities for primary education.<sup>3</sup> The numerical preponderance of Municipalities might suggest an urbanised province. But there was only one really major city, Calcutta, which stood head and shoulders above the rest : in 1901 half the total urban population of Bengal lived in this one city.<sup>4</sup> Apart from Calcutta and its neighbouring towns Bengal had few other industrial towns - Asansol and Raniganj in the coal-mining area, Narayanganj the jute centre in Eastern Bengal and the port of Chittagong. The second city of Bengal, Dacca just topped the 100,000 mark.<sup>5</sup> For the rest, the other municipalities

1. Rules and Orders of the Bengal Education Department, 1927, 14-15, Government Notification issued on 15 Nov 1904.

2. H. Tinker, The Foundations of Local Self-Government in India, Pakistan and Burma, 70.

3. BAR, 1911-1912, 183-86.

4. Broomfield, 5.

5. The Indian Annual Register, 1919, 81. Calcutta's population, including Howrah was 12,22,313 in 1911.

governed market towns or administrative district headquarter towns, with bazar, court, collectorate offices and schools as their centre and a clustering of quarters which were little more than villages, interspersed with open paddy or jute fields.<sup>1</sup> The conditions for the formation of a municipality were that at least three-fourths of the adult males must be primarily engaged in occupations other than agriculture and that the total population must be not less than 3,000 and at a density of not less than 1,000 per square mile.<sup>2</sup> With an average population of from ten to twenty thousand, however, the Bengal municipality was only half town, still half overgrown village. And their small populations were not wealthy - most municipalities required of their electorate only that they should pay not less than Rs 1-8 in rates or taxes a year.<sup>3</sup> Those who were so qualified formed less than a sixth of the municipal population.<sup>4</sup> The scale of municipal taxation in Bengal was lower than in other provinces and so was the percentage of ratepayers to total municipal population.<sup>5</sup> The absolute figures for income and expenditure were very low since the average incidence of municipal taxation per head for the whole province was no more than Rs 1-14-8. The highest rate was Rs 4-15-3 in the Cossipur-Chitpur municipality, a suburb of Calcutta, the lowest 4 annas 4 pies in Debhatta in western Bengal,<sup>6</sup> but over the Presidency Division as a whole, where the demand for a progressive municipal administration might be expected to have been strong, the incidence was only Rs 1-10-1 per head.<sup>7</sup> The functions of the municipalities were wide -

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1. See the autobiography of Buddhadev Bose, 1904-1973, Amar Chelebela (My Childhood). Bose, the best known and most prolific of post-Tagore writers in Bengali, spent his boyhood and adolescence in Noakhali and Dacca. For a slightly earlier period see M.S. Islam, 'Life in the Mufasssal Towns of Nineteenth-Century Bengal' in K. Ballhatchet and J Harrison (eds) The City in South Asia.

2. ISC, VIII, 62.

3. ISC, VIII, 71.

4. BAR, 1911-1912, 183-86.

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid. The income of Debhatta in 1926-27, other than from loans and extraordinary receipts was Rs 2,584 - about £190 - for the year - see ISC, VIII, 73.

7. BAR 1911-1912, 183-86. The principal sources of municipal income were taxes on houses and lands, on animals and vehicles, plus tolls on roads and ferries.

water-supply, drainage, road maintenance and lighting, ferries, primary education, hospitals and dispensaries. With such exiguous sources of income, however, services were necessarily rudimentary.

Rural local government remained at an even more rudimentary level. Public opinion in the countryside might be more articulate in Bengal than in other provinces, and the rural middle classes and the greater landlords took a keener interest in politics in Bengal than elsewhere. But once again resources were scanty and, so Tinker argues, "in Bengal both official and landlord agreed that the district board was 'a government office'; official control is so close that there is no sense of local responsibility"<sup>1</sup>

The unit adopted for rural self-government was the civil district. Each district was administered by a District Board on the model of the English County Councils. But whereas in England the average area under a County Council was only 800 square miles in Bengal that under a District Board was 2,700 square miles.<sup>2</sup> The contrast was still more striking in regard to population. The average rural population in an English county was 128,000, the average population of a Bengal district was between  $1\frac{1}{2}$  and  $1\frac{3}{4}$  millions.<sup>3</sup> This was too large an area for a single body to administer hence all except two small districts were split up into subdivisions each placed under a local board. In 1912, there were 71 such local boards in Bengal. These were in their turn divided into still smaller units of local administration called union committees each consisting of a village or a group of villages.

The electorate for all the rural boards and committees were absurdly small and not always active, but official control was nevertheless carefully imposed. The District Magistrate was everywhere ex-officio chairman of his District Board, and half of the Board was nominated by Government. The other half of the District Board was indirectly elected by the Local Boards, themselves partly nominated, though they were allowed, subject to government

1. Tinker, 78-79.

2. I.S.C. VIII, 63.

3. Ibid.



approval, to elect their own chairman. The union committees in 1912 were still nowhere near universal in Bengal. In 1912 there were 56 in the whole province and in East Bengal they were missing altogether from the Dacca and Rajshahi divisions.<sup>1</sup>

The original intention of Ripon had been that the local board should be the key institution, with the district boards as co-ordinating bodies. In Bengal, however, the pull of district administration was too strong, and it was to the district boards that power and funds were allocated. It was in them that the maintenance of public Primary, Middle English and Middle Vernacular was vested and through them that grants-in-aid to private schools of these grades were administered. The district boards did not devolve the administration of the grants-in-aid upon the local boards but in general they gave them little independence and less money. The union committee's role in education was confined to inspection of the Primary schools. For funds they were left dependent on the grudging charity of the district boards.<sup>2</sup> Though by 1917 five Bengal district boards had been allowed to elect non-official chairmen, in other respects they still remained part of the bureaucratic district administration.<sup>3</sup> In 1918 the twenty-six district boards and 70-odd local boards shared an income of 107 lakhs - a third of a rupee per head of population.<sup>4</sup> This was the framework established for the vast rural population of Bengal from whom came the great bulk of the primary school pupils. Thus a primary school, in its most typical form, was a village school attended by the boys (and a few of the girls) of the village and surrounding hamlets, coming in on foot.<sup>5</sup> They were the children of such peasants, labourers, artisans, petty traders and other villagers as were able and willing to send them to school. The census figures of literacy for selected castes give a rough idea of how large a contribution these various groups made to the primary schools in the Bengal

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1. BQR , 1911-1912, 66-68.

2. Ibid.

3. Tinker, 101.

4. Ibid, 104.

5. BQR 1912-13 to 1916-17, 49.

countryside. Whereas the bhadralok, the Baidya, Brahman and Kayastha and the Muslim Sayyad - all of whom might be present in the villages as zemindars or rentiers or in the district towns as professional men, government officials or clerks - had male literacy rates in 1911<sup>1</sup> of 72, 64, 57 and 31 per cent, the cultivators, the Sadgop and the lowlier Namasudra achieved 26 and 10 per cent respectively and the Bauri labourers 2. Of the artisans the Jogi (weaver), Kumhar (potter) and Kamar (blacksmith) had 8, 15, and 28 per cent of their number literate, the Sunri (goldsmith) and Teli (oilman) 28 and 30. The Bania or Shaha was not listed in 1911, but in 1921<sup>2</sup> had a 44 per cent literacy rate, the Napit (barber) 21, the Dhobi 10 and the Muchi or leatherworker 2 per cent. The scavengers, Dom and Hari, are omitted from the 1911 literacy tables altogether but in 1921 are shown as less than 4 per cent literate. (Since these are figures for the whole male population and since school attendance was rising, the figures for the younger generation would be higher than those given. Also many children had some abbreviated schooling but did not achieve or retain literacy.) The social or class profile is clear enough and demonstrates an educational hierarchy closely tied to caste status - as, for example, in the clear demarcation between bhadralok and all others, or the contrast between clean Sudra Sadgop, unclean Sudra Namasudra and untouchable Bauri. The Muslims, as a group apart, have in every class a literacy rate lower than their Hindu counterparts - the Muslim weaver<sup>or</sup> Jolaha 8, the Muslim barber or Hajjam 5 and the Muslim Dhobi 4 per cent literacy rate.<sup>3</sup>

In villages where non-cultivating, high-caste Hindu families, <sup>and</sup> ~~as~~ Muslims of a respectable class were found, their children were often tutored at home until they were old enough to go to a Middle School. Alternatively their children might be sent to the primary section of a High School since these were better staffed than village schools, charged higher fees and attracted a better

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1. Census of India, Vol V, Bengal of 1911, I, 373.

2. Census of India, Vol V, Bengal of 1911, I, 373.

3. Census of India, Vol V, Bengal of 1911, I, 373.

class of pupil.<sup>1</sup> If such children did go to school in the village it was often to one opened co-operatively by the families, in an out-house or spare room of one of their houses. (A few children of families outside the caste or social group might be allowed to attend too.) Dinendrakumar Roy, the writer, in his Palli-Chitra describes such a pathsala "housed in the 'Thakur-ghar' of the Chakrabarties ... a shed with thatched roof and mud walls on three sides."<sup>2</sup>

For the rest of the children it was the village school. This would almost certainly be a private school, for in 1911-12 only 5.2% of Primary schools in Bengal were Government or local government body run.<sup>3</sup> And unlike the Government schools, often used as practising schools for teachers in training, which were substantial PWD - designed buildings, the village school might be anything from an open shed, the shadow of a tree or some generous patron's verandah. (There was a growing opinion against expenditure on building materials for village schools - after all, as a missionary commented, most Bengali boys lived in thatched mud cottages "which an English working man would despise ... If there are any pictures they are crude representations of scenes from Hindu mythology. The furniture is meagre - no chairs, tables or beds - as a rule only a wicker stool or two, and some wooden boxes. The handsomest things in the house are the brass plates, dishes, cups and other vessels which the women of the family take pride in keeping well polished."<sup>4</sup> (If this was a typical, reasonably prosperous village household, why should children or parents ask for anything more elaborate of their school?) Roy's thatched and mudwalled pathsala was thus typical enough and its village setting : "The pathsala faced an open courtyard which the elderly women of the para used as a drying place for their cowdung cakes. Across the courtyard women of the para moved freely from one para to another. On three sides of the pathsala we had bamboo clumps, fruit

1. See Tarashankar Banerjee, Shandipan Pathsala, 33.

2. See Dinendrakumar Roy, Palli Chitra (Village Sketches).

3. BQR, 1912-13 to 1916-17, 48-49.

4. D.S. Batley, Bengali Schooldays, introduction. J.C. Jack, Economic Life of a Bengal District, 26, writes in similar terms. On the opposition to expenditure on buildings see, for example The Modern Review, June 1915.



A LOWER PRIMARY SCHOOL, BENGAL.



Photo-Mounted. Dept. of Education, Roorkee.

TYPE PLAN UPPER PRIMARY SCHOOL, BENGAL.

orchards and low lying ditches."<sup>1</sup> This pathsala had no chair, table, black-board or benches, the pandit just had an ancient stool for himself, the only item of furniture in the whole pathsala. The primary school which Apu, the boy-hero of the Apu tri logy, went to was a grocery shop as well as school - two adjoining rooms with no partition between. His classroom was as bare as Roy's : "There were some big boys seated near Apu. They were sitting on grass mats reciting something. Their voices were harsh and strident, and as they recited they swung their bodies backwards and forwards in a way that frightened him." "The afternoon session of the school was attended by some eight or ten students, both boys and girls. Except for Apu they had all brought mats to sit on." "The classroom was open on all sides. There were no walls, neither was there a fence outside to limit the view." "The Schoolmaster usually sat on a palm-leaf mat leaning against one of the pillars, and the pillar he leant against was dark with the oil on his hair."<sup>2</sup>

Children came to school at hours dictated by the climate and the time of the year. They might have a meal at home and arrive at eleven in the morning, or, during the hot weather days come early in the morning, break for a midday meal and then perhaps assemble again later. School hours varied from three to five a day. Apart from the usual Sundays, schools also closed on numerous festival days in sowing and reaping seasons and for a three weeks' vacation in the summer. As most of these pathsalas had one teacher only the organisation of the children of different age groups into classes had to fit that limitation. The teacher would give some of the children sums or writing - perhaps under the eyes of a monitor or Sardar Parua - while he would take a class or possibly two classes together in reading, tables, spelling, mental arithmetic or some

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1. Dinendrakumar Roy, 13.

2. Bibhutibhshan Banerjee, Pather Panchali, 110-112.

other oral subject. The infants would form letters with seeds on the floor, repeat rhymes and stories, learn counting and then sing multiplication tables. The children brought their own mats, books, slate, pen, ink and coarse country-produced paper. These last items they were not at first allowed to use, practising their writing of the alphabet on the ground, then on palm leaf, banana leaf and so at last on paper itself. The higher classes used books in the vernacular. They contained stories, simple biographies, rhymes and a little poetry, lessons on agricultural objects, crops and cattle, perhaps a few simple history lessons. They were inexpensive and usually illustrated. They would, of course, have been approved by the Inspectors of Schools.

There was no formal examination or award of certificates at the end of the Primary years, although class examinations for promotion were held in schools maintained by local government bodies. A few pupils were entered, however, for the examinations at the end of the Lower and the Upper Primary courses on which scholarships were awarded. These were not open to all, rather each school was allowed to send up one or more candidates to a maximum of three times the number of scholarships available for the district. In 1912-13, for example, there were 210 Upper Primary scholarships of Rs 3 per month, tenable for two years, for the whole of Bengal - roughly four per district, or four for every one and a half million population. Of these 25 were reserved for Muslim and 8 for Backward Class children.<sup>1</sup>

Most of the primary schools were small, one teacher affairs, owned and managed by the man who taught there. Occasionally a para or mohalla might co-operate in establishing a school and inviting a pandit or moulvi to take charge.<sup>2</sup> In a few instances there might be more than one teacher. But the bulk of the schools represented the private enterprise of someone with a

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1. BQR - 1912-13 to 1916-17, 54.

2. This may have been truer of Muslim communities since some education was required to fulfill the individual's religious obligations.  
BQR, 1912-13 to 1916-17, 52.

little education needing some addition to a meagre livelihood from some other trade or profession. The costs were low, simple buildings, no equipment except a stool and a cane, while the materials of education were provided by the pupils themselves. The average monthly cost of a Primary School in 1911-12 was Rs 7.8 - of unaided schools Rs 4, or less than 10 shillings a month.<sup>1</sup>

But if costs were low so were standards, salaries and rewards. The primary school teacher was a villager, not necessarily from the village where he taught, but generally from the neighbourhood. At the end of 1916-17 Bengal had a little more than forty thousand such teachers, 16 per cent of whom were normal school trained, 71 per cent had other qualifications, and 13 per cent had no special qualifications. Usually the minimum qualification accepted was the lower primary standard - and this minimum was all that rather more than 10 per cent possessed.<sup>2</sup> With such qualifications few school teachers could be expected to display any great erudition or width of vision. Few were trained - not many perhaps were suitable for any advanced training. It could scarcely be otherwise, for primary teaching was a sweated profession - or perhaps industry - paying less than a living wage.

Monthly Pay of Primary School Teachers in Bengal, 1913-17.

<u>Division</u>	<u>Public Management</u>		<u>Private Management</u>	
	<u>Range</u>	<u>Average</u>	<u>Range</u>	<u>Average</u>
Burdwan	Rs 9.to 16.	Rs 14.	5.to 25.	7.8.
Presidency (excluding Calcutta)	8.to 9.	10.9.	5.to 30.	7.8.
Dacca	4.to 17.	10.4.	4.to 11.	7.1.
Chittagong	5.to 18.	8.7.	3.to 12.	6.7.
Rajshahi	4.to 18.	9.1.	4.to 12.	7.9.
Calcutta city	-	18.5.	10.to 30.	10.5.
Source : <u>BQR 1912-13 to 1916-17, 53.</u>				

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1. A Town Hall meeting in Calcutta on 28 July 1913 to protest against the Government of India's Education Resolution of 1913 declared against wasting resources on costly primary school buildings - better education under the banyan tree than that. The Modern Review, Aug 1913, 221-225.

2. Ibid., 53.



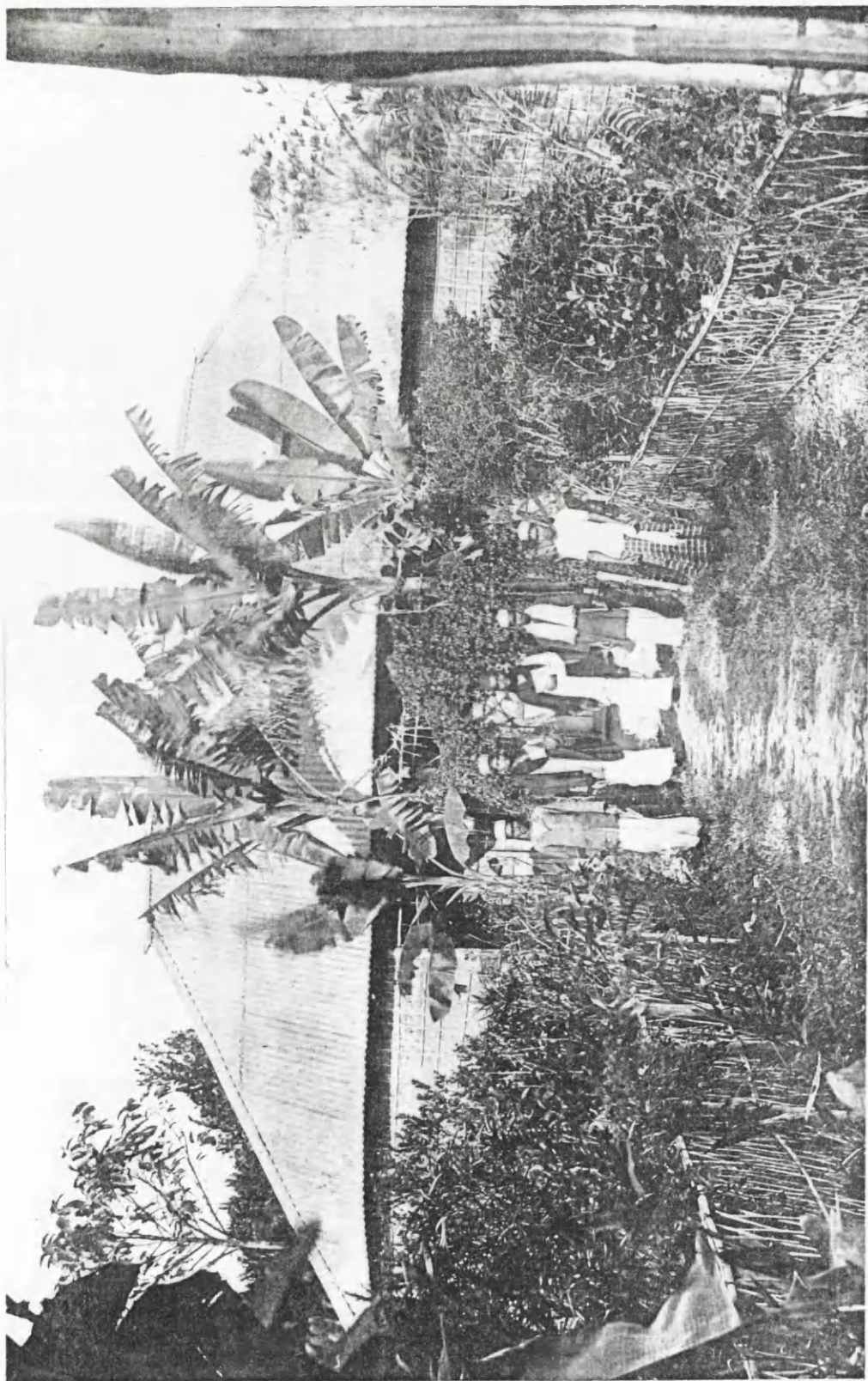


Photo-McClint, Dept., Thompson College, Rarotonga.

A GURU-TRAINING SCHOOL.



This was a scale of pay which even the lowly menials, office orderlies, hotel cooks would have refused : the Khansamahs' Union in Calcutta demanded Rs 35 as a minimum monthly wage.<sup>1</sup> Some of the figures were so low as to be almost incredible. Thus in Chittagong Division the average monthly emoluments - was there ever a bigger word for a smaller thing ? asked the DPI's report - of a teacher in an unaided school was Rs 3.3.<sup>2</sup> J.C. Jack, at the start of the war, when he divided the cultivators of Faridpur into four income groups gave to the lowest 5%, those living in indigence, a monthly income of nearly Rs 10,<sup>3</sup> while Panandikar in the early 1920's gave Rs 12 to 15 as the ordinary wages of a labourer, plus food.<sup>4</sup> The teachers' low pay drew bitter comment from Tarashankar Banerjee in his novel *Shandipan Pathsala*. "Even the domestic servants and the khansamahs - without the benefit of any education - nowadays receive free board, lodging and clothes in addition to their salary."<sup>5</sup> This may be matched from the writings of the Muslim author Syed Mujtaba Ali who describes the visit of the British commissioner to a village school. After the visit the pandit tells his pupils that while his salary is Rs 20 a month, the officer spends Rs 75 upon his three legged dog, and he asks them by mental arithmetic to work out how much is spent upon each member of his family, how much upon each leg of the visiting Sahib's dog.<sup>6</sup> If the story is a true one the pandit's self-humiliation and

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1. BQR, 1917-18 to 1921-22, 40.

2. BQR, 1922-23 to 1926-27, 54.

3. J.C. Jack, 81.

4. S.G. Panandikar, The Wealth and Welfare of the Bengal Delta, 61.

5. Tarashanker Banerjee, 4.

6. Syed Mujtaba Ali was perhaps the most erudite writer Bengal has ever produced. Son of a petty government official Ali was expelled from school for leading a protest strike against a British ICS officer for beating up children stealing flowers from his garden. He then studied at Shantiniketan and with Tagore's help secured a Hindi lectureship at Kabul University. In the early thirties he did his doctorate in comparative theology at Munich - most of the stories in *Chacha Kahini*, (Stories told by Uncle), refer to the period he spent in Hitler's Germany. Widely travelled he knew all the major Indian and European languages. His literary style is a unique blend of scholarship, wit and humour.

despair are terrible indeed. Under such circumstances teachers could not give their whole time to the work, supplementing their inadequate salaries by working a patch of land, clerking for shopkeepers, acting as private tutors, as landlords' agents, as village quacks or postmasters.<sup>1</sup>

Their salary and the cost of running the school the teachers had to collect in the form of fees from pupils whose parents were often unwilling or unable to pay in time.<sup>2</sup> They might also receive something in kind, for Bengal had a long tradition of paying its pandits in kind, with gifts, or *sidha*, of rice, ghee, fruit and garden or dairy produce, or clothes and other items of daily use.<sup>3</sup> Dinendrakumar Roy in his Palli Chitra lists the sources of income of the Brahman pandit of his *pathsala* : "Each month he received a rupee or a quarter rupee as *dakshina*, and very often pupil used to bring *sidhas* which included tobacco, rice, dal, salt, oil and such-like items. As a Brahman he was also invariably invited for meals at weddings, sacred thread ceremonies, *brata* or any other religious ceremonies."<sup>4</sup> This custom of gift making was slowly dying out, so that by the second decade of this century it had ceased to form a regular source of income in most districts of Bengal.<sup>5</sup> The village school teacher in consequence came increasingly to rely on grants-in-aid from the district boards. But this was a very inadequate source of income, since monthly grants to primary schools might be anything from Rs 2 to Rs 14.<sup>6</sup>

Primary school teaching was a despised profession. Teaching in India was generally underpaid, particularly in Bengal, but this was the bottom of the ladder. Only those who had failed elsewhere turned to the primary school

1. There were 331 primary school teachers who also worked as sub postmasters in 1921-22 and earned additional incomes of from Rs 4 to Rs 17.  
BQR, 1922-23 to 1926-27, 54-55.

2. IQR, 1907-1912, II, 252. The average fee paid by pupils in primary school was Aided Rs 1-7-10 Unaided Rs 1-10-4.

3. This was more a Hindu than a Muslim tradition.

4. Dinendrakumar Roy, 1-32.

5. BQR, 1912-13 to 1916-17, 54.

6. DLCP, answer to Q3, 21 Feb. 1921, 18.

as a last resort, and in the villages they were looked upon as the rejects of all other professions. Their low status reflected their low educational achievement and low earning capacity, and in the case of Hindus the encroachment of the lower castes on what traditionally had been a Brahman preserve denied the village teachers even an hereditary formal status. The little measure of dignity they enjoyed or respect they commanded in society can be judged from the social stereotype of the village pandit in Bengali literature. But first a real life portrait by Roy :- "The scholarly guru of our pathsala was Chandrakanta Chakrabarty popularly nicknamed 'Chandurey the lame' because of his limp due to an accident sustained in his early boyhood. He was a middle-aged man, of short stature and dark complexion with a thick moustache the bristles of which stood straight on end. The pupils feared him like a Jama, god of death. His belly was very big - large enough, said one of his students, to accommodate both the hemispheres of this world. Nobody knew what his age was. And although he used to claim the fathers of most of his pupils as his students, when the question of his age came up he never admitted to any age beyond forty. He had a bullying wife who was more than a match for him. After one of his innumerable rows with the Brahmani he would come to the pathsala and let all his frustrations out on the back of his pupils." About his educational qualifications Roy was scarcely more charitable - "Chakrabarty knew precious little. His family profession was Ayurvedic medicine in which he failed to make a living."<sup>1</sup>

This was a real life portrait of a man with a bare minimum of education, poor, bad-tempered, feared by his pupils and yet taunted and ridiculed by them. Socially, his lack of wealth and education placed him at a disadvantage among fellow high caste people while the low-born accorded him only the grudging recognition due to his high caste. From the pages of Bengali fiction emerges the same image of the pandit - barely literate, indigent, scourge of his

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1. Dinendrakumar Roy - Palli-Chitra, 4-6.

pupils, prone to falling asleep in the class, the butt of youthful pranks, jokes and doggerel.<sup>1</sup>

That such a pandit had and could have, little idea of what school-teaching ought to be is clear, and the point is made in Bibhutibhushan's description of Apu's pathsala teacher, Proshonno, whose "ability with the cane more than made up for his ignorance of educational methods and the absence of proper equipment. He used it with such careless abandon that it is a wonder that the students escaped with their lives, let alone being lamed or blinded."<sup>2</sup> Notwithstanding their success in terrorising the pupils, the primary school teachers were a far from aggressive group. They were acutely aware of their lack of economic or intellectual power in relation to all other social groups except the illiterate peasants and artisans. Tarashankar Banerjee thus describes a group of pandits waiting at the office of the Sub-Inspector of Schools : "Their poverty is stamped on them by their shabby dress, their emaciated figure, their sunken eyes and humble looks. The well-dressed babus of Ratnahata (the prosperous village of the novel) pass them by smoking cigarettes - they look on silently."<sup>3</sup>

The low pay and prospects of primary school teaching had another effect that of changing the caste composition of the profession. Teaching had been a preserve of the high caste Hindus, particularly the Brahmins. Now they avoided teaching in village schools if they had a choice. But for the aspiring members of the low castes teaching in pathsalas provided for all its poor pay a way out. It was through education - even of a very inadequate type - that they could hope to break caste barriers, to rise a cut above their

1. This was how Roy described the sleeping Chandrakanta. "At midday one would find the Guru sleeping and snoring hideously, seated on his decrepit throne - the wooden stool - leaning against the wall, mouth slightly open and eyes half closed, his wet towel on his shoulders. And the pupils would learn their lessons in a whispering voice so as not to wake him up."

2. Bibhutibhushan Banerjee - Pather Panchali, 110.

3. Tarashankar Banerjee, Shandipan Pathsala, 76.

caste fellows, to gain social respectability, even acceptance into the charmed circle of the bhadralok. From time immemorial, education had been a hall-mark and monopoly of the bhadraloks who jealously guarded the keys to that gate of their society. Upward social mobility was still difficult, but the new secular system of western education offered the disadvantaged groups at least a better opportunity to rise above their social disabilities.<sup>1</sup> This desire of the lower classes to use the pathsala as a vehicle of upward mobility forms the theme of Tarashankar's novel Shandipan Pathsala,<sup>2</sup> as it had, in part, of Saratchandra Chatterjee's pioneering novel, Pandit Mashai, published in 1915.

Although the novel was first published in 1945, its action is set in the years 1915 - 1944. Sitaram, son of a relatively prosperous Sadgop cultivator is sent to the local High School, but cannot master the intricacies of English. He is therefore sent to train as a primary teacher in the Normal School at Hooghly. "It was his ambition to pass this Normal School examination so that he could settle somewhere outside his village (presumably in a town) with a teaching job. Then he would be accepted into educated society, would have the good fortune to know many fine people and to learn from them. When he came to his village for his vacation there would be an equally honoured place for him there." But he fails the examination and so has to be content with a job as pathsala pandit, setting up a school, not in his own

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1. That the new education was open to all irrespective of caste is noted by one of the high caste characters in Shandipan Pathsala. Monilal Babu, while congratulating the Sadgop hero Sitaram on his success at the Normal School final examination, says "Mlechcha Vidya (Western Knowledge) does not recognise any Brahman-Sudra caste bar, everybody has a right to it." Then rather patronisingly he advises "Take to education, develop into proper human beings, remove the stigma of illiteracy attached to your caste." Ibid., 20

2. Tarashankar Banerjee was born 1898 in a village in Birbhum district of West Bengal, in an old, decaying zamindar family. While an Intermediate student of St Xavier's College, Calcutta he was interned in his home village. This and ill-health put an end to his study. In 1921 he was imprisoned for Non-Co-Operation activities, in 1924-25 worked as a volunteer in cholera-ravaged Birbhum villages and then in a relative's colliery business, and only thereafter took up writing as his profession. He was one of the first and most successful of that group of Bengali writers who broke from the Tagore tradition, that combination of romanticism and of detached observation of underprivileged life from what Tagore himself called 'the upstairs window of upper class Bhadraklok society'. Tarashankar and his group came closer to the vast rural population of Bengal than any earlier high caste writer. Another of his persistent themes was the way in which decades of colonial rule had destroyed the structure of village-based Bengali society.

but in the more desirable neighbouring village of Ratnahata where "the educated, the respectable and the wealthy people formed the dominant section"<sup>1</sup>

The first stage in his escape from his ancestral village society and hereditary occupation<sup>comes</sup> when he is appointed home tutor to the young boys of the zamindar family of Ratnahata, "where the bhadra, educated and Brahman are in a majority".<sup>2</sup> But when he establishes his school there his patron zamindars refuse to send their children to it because it is meant for and draws its pupils from the lower castes - the Shaha, Kaibarta, the fishermen, weavers, potters and carpenters. They come to the pathsala because they would be looked down upon in the primary section of the local High School catering to the needs of high caste children.<sup>3</sup>

Of those who do attend the pathsala the most forward-looking are the Shahas, distillers by caste, but moneylenders also. They have a strong economic base and in dress and manners, as Sitaram Pandit says, they are bhadra too. But still they are Jal-Achal to the high castes, people from whose hands drinking water cannot be accepted, and if they venture to send their children to the primary section of the High School they face social discrimination from high caste children and the teachers.<sup>4</sup> The Kaibarta and other fisherman of the village are also prosperous, though not as educationally advanced, but they are beginning to see the advantages of literacy. Their livelihood depends on

1. Tarashankar Banerjee, Shandipan Pathsala, 96-97.

2. Ibid., 29.

3. Ibid., 35.

4. Tarashankar describes how Sitaram from close contact in Ratnahata comes to shed his awe for the bhadralok babus and realise that it was class differences which has been its root. In his young days "Zamindars, Babus, brick-built two-storied houses, wealth and property - all these were enough to make him - the son of a cultivating ryot - deferential towards them." And how did the children of such persons lord it at school? "They come to the pathsala well-dressed, they have new brightly-coloured pencils, colourful books, marbles and carry lozenges in their pockets. Children from less privileged houses are eager to curry favour with them or even to stand or sit near them. Those who are very poor maintain a distance in wide-eyed wonder."

The contrast was of zamindar double-storied kotha and single-storey hut or ghar of mud and thatch, with its little pond, for washing and for fish, barn and cowshed. "A cow-shed is to a peasant what a katchery is to the zamindar or a baithakkhana is to the bhadralok." Shandipan Pathsala, 73 and 6-7.

the leasing of private fisheries from bhadralok and zaminars, oral transactions based on mutual trust. But, says Sitaram, time has changed. Now even your thumb print on a written document is not enough, so that the Kaibarta want their children to be armed with literacy.<sup>1</sup>

Similar motives induced the large Muslim population of Eastern Bengal to send their children to primary schools. Since they preferred an education with a strong religious element the special Muslim institutions called maktabas were numerous. Government policy was to encourage the conversion of these into ordinary primary schools by making them adopt the standard departmental secular curriculum - the three R's in the vernacular - in addition to religious instruction. This policy of transforming indigenous maktabas into regular primary schools of a modified type, pursued steadily from 1904, proved highly successful. As regards other primary schools, the strongly Muslim character of the population and the staffing of many elementary schools by Muslim teachers facilitated admission of Muslim pupils into them. This was reflected in the enrolment figures. Whereas in 1901-02, Muslims in Bengal Primary schools (including maktabas) constituted 28 per cent of the total pupil numbers, by 1913-14 the proportion was as high as 43 per cent.<sup>2</sup> The jute-growing lands of Eastern Bengal enjoyed relative prosperity till the mid-twenties, and this enabled many cultivators to send their sons to school - this being the recognised pathway to respectability and social advancement. Some of them were beginning also to recognise, however dimly, the usefulness of literacy as an equipment for life.

Muslim society, however, lacked any equivalent of the bhadralok, the dominant, high caste elite. The leading Muslim literate group recorded

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1. Tarashankar Banerjee, Shandipan Pathsala, 99.

2. Report of the Advisory Committee on Moslem Education (Momen Committee), 16.

in the censuses, the Sayyids, were mainly found in west and central Bengal, and not in large numbers. There was thus a less strong literate tradition among Muslims than within Hindu society, and as tenants of bhadralok zamindars Muslim cultivators even suffered some positive discouragement from landlords unwilling to see them acquire a potentially dangerous education.

The Mulla, Moulvi or 'Pandit,' (Muslim teachers might be so addressed), who with a nominal knowledge of Islam and the vernacular set up a maktab, came from the same sort of village, economic and educational background as the Hindu pandit of the pathsala. The education they provided was of much the same level. In those days primary education for a Muslim village boy, so Abdur Rahman writes, meant ability to read the Quran and literacy in the vernacular. Many had that type of education, while anyone who could read a punthi, particularly difficult punthis such as the 'Padmavati' of Syed Alawal and could explain them clearly was regarded as a pandit and "enjoyed quite a respectable position in society".<sup>1</sup> The condition of the Muslim maktab teachers differed little from that of the Hindu pandits as regards pay, prospects or status.

Primary education was handicapped by ill paid qualified teachers and inadequate schools and equipment. It was also hampered by parental neglect, or disbelief in the value of education for their children, and by parental poverty which required some contribution to the family income from even the youngest hands. The primary education of many children was too often interrupted or too early abandoned. As a result the schools, or the education imparted in them, were notoriously inefficient, characterised by the most appalling wastage. Thus the Quinquennial Review

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1. Abdur Rahman - Jatatuku Mane Para, (As Far as I can Remember), 12.



for the opening years of our period records how the 491,482 pupils in the lower class of the infant section reduce to 402,751 in the highest infant class, to 271,059 in the lowest class in the primary grade, to 210,030 in the class above that and so to 126,000 in the third primary standard,<sup>1</sup> the first stage at which there was even a bare chance of literacy.

For all these shortcomings in the primary system, this period witnessed a growing public interest in the spread of literacy, a recognition of the predominant claim of primary education on public funds and a demand for a more active and direct role of the State in fostering schools under public management. G.K. Gokhale's Elementary Education Bill of 1911, introduced and discussed though finally defeated in the Imperial Legislative Council, both reflected and created a heightened public opinion in favour of more mass education. And though the Government of India, for financial and administrative reasons rejected compulsory primary education, it accepted the desirability of the widest possible extension, on a voluntary basis, of primary education. (Primary education, designed to serve two ends - the effective grounding of able children who would successfully climb all the educational ladder leading to success in business, service and the professions, and the equipping of the large mass of children with education useful in their day-to-day work.) Hence the Education Resolution of the Government of India, issued in February 1913, laid down that expansion should be secured by means of Board schools, or where this was financially impossible then aided schools

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1. BQR, 1912-13 to 1916-17, 60.

under recognised management were to be encouraged. But 'venture schools', - a category under which the large majority of pathsalas and maktabas in Bengal would come - were not to be relied on unless they submitted to inspection, without which they were useless for the purposes of literacy. No great distinction could be drawn between the urban and rural primary school curricula but teachers, it was advised, should come from the same class as the pupils, they should have passed the Middle Vernacular examination, or an equivalent course, and should have one year's training. For those with only an Upper Primary education, two years training was prescribed. For the trained teachers a minimum salary of Rs 12 per month, a graded service and the benefit of a pension or a provident fund were strongly advocated.<sup>1</sup> What the Resolution did not indicate, however, was how these improvements were to be funded.

The Bengal Government certainly did not have the funds to do anything and the finances of the local bodies were proverbially inelastic. It was therefore with funds provided by the Central Government that Bengal was able to launch a scheme of improvement in 1912-1913. It was felt that what Bengal needed most was improvement and consolidation of existing schools which were often too small and while overlapping in some areas were lacking in others. ("Inspecting officers are prone to neglect the growth of school<sup>level</sup> where the population is comparatively depressed and where touring is a matter of great difficulty....")<sup>2</sup> The very first task was to secure accurate maps and then to plot on them the existing school resources. Then some schools could be retrenched and elsewhere new ones established to create a complete network. In Eastern Bengal this work began in 1906 under Henry Sharp the DPI who sought to upgrade an existing aided school or build a new Board Lower Primary School in every Panchayati or Chaukidari Union-about nine square miles in area. For new schools it was expected that half an acre would be donated by the local landlords or tenants, and something towards the Rs. 500 building costs per school. (The public response quite outstripped the Boards' ability to take them on.) In this way

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1. Education Resolution, 1913, Para 11.

2. IQR 1907-1912, 135.

nearly 1350 new Board schools were opened and over 650 aided schools adopted as Union schools. Within six years half the Unions had been provided for.<sup>1</sup> After the annulment of partition, the plan was extended to all Bengal, the aim being to provide each Union with a school of a cheap type, the expense Rs 1,000, being wholly borne by the government while the annual upkeep of the schools was left to the District Board.<sup>2</sup> Thus the scheme provided for the payment of Rs 10 per month between the two teachers who would form the usual staff, the head pandit generally getting Rs. 7 and his assistant Rs. 3. The fees estimated to amount to about Rs. 6 per month would also be divided.<sup>3</sup> Some of the aided schools, 300 Lower Primary and 100 Upper Primary, were provided with Government buildings though of a cheaper type. The Government contribution would be Rs. 200 for a Lower and Rs. 300 for an Upper Primary School, the villagers contributing another 50 rupees and being held responsible for annual repairs.<sup>4</sup> During 1913-1914 Government spent an additional Rs. 1,50,000 on buildings for another 750 Lower Primary Schools. The experiment did not prove very successful - many of the buildings tumbled down in a short time because of lack of proper planning supervision during construction and later maintenance.

The Panchayati Union scheme also made slow progress. To complete the scheme in the whole province 2450 Board Primary Schools were needed but by the end of 1921-22 the number of Board Primary Schools for which funds had been allotted under the scheme stood at 533.<sup>5</sup> The completion of this scheme turned mainly upon provision of funds: nothing illustrated more clearly the bankruptcy of the Bengal Government than the way in which it had depended throughout on funds doled out by the central government. When the flow of money from that source was interrupted by the war in 1914 school building stopped and only a central grant of Rs. 5,50,000 enabled the Department to resume operation in 1918-1919.<sup>6</sup>

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1. IQR, 1907-1912, I, 135.

2. BQR, 1922-23-1926-27, 55.

3. ISC, VIII, 23.

4. BQR, 1912-13 to 1916-17, 56.

5. BQR, 1922-23-1926-27, 38.

6. BQR, 1922-23-1926-1927, 55.

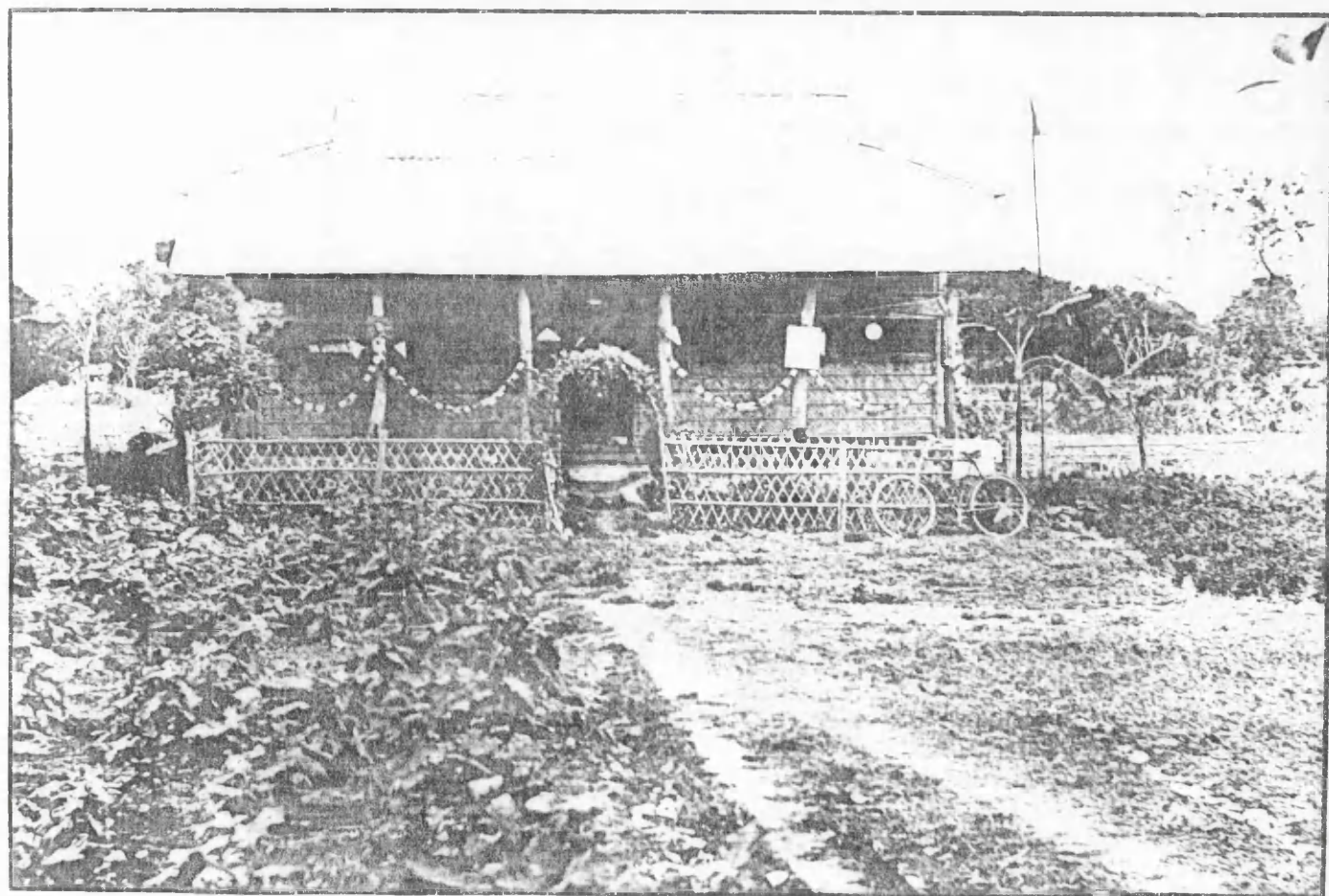
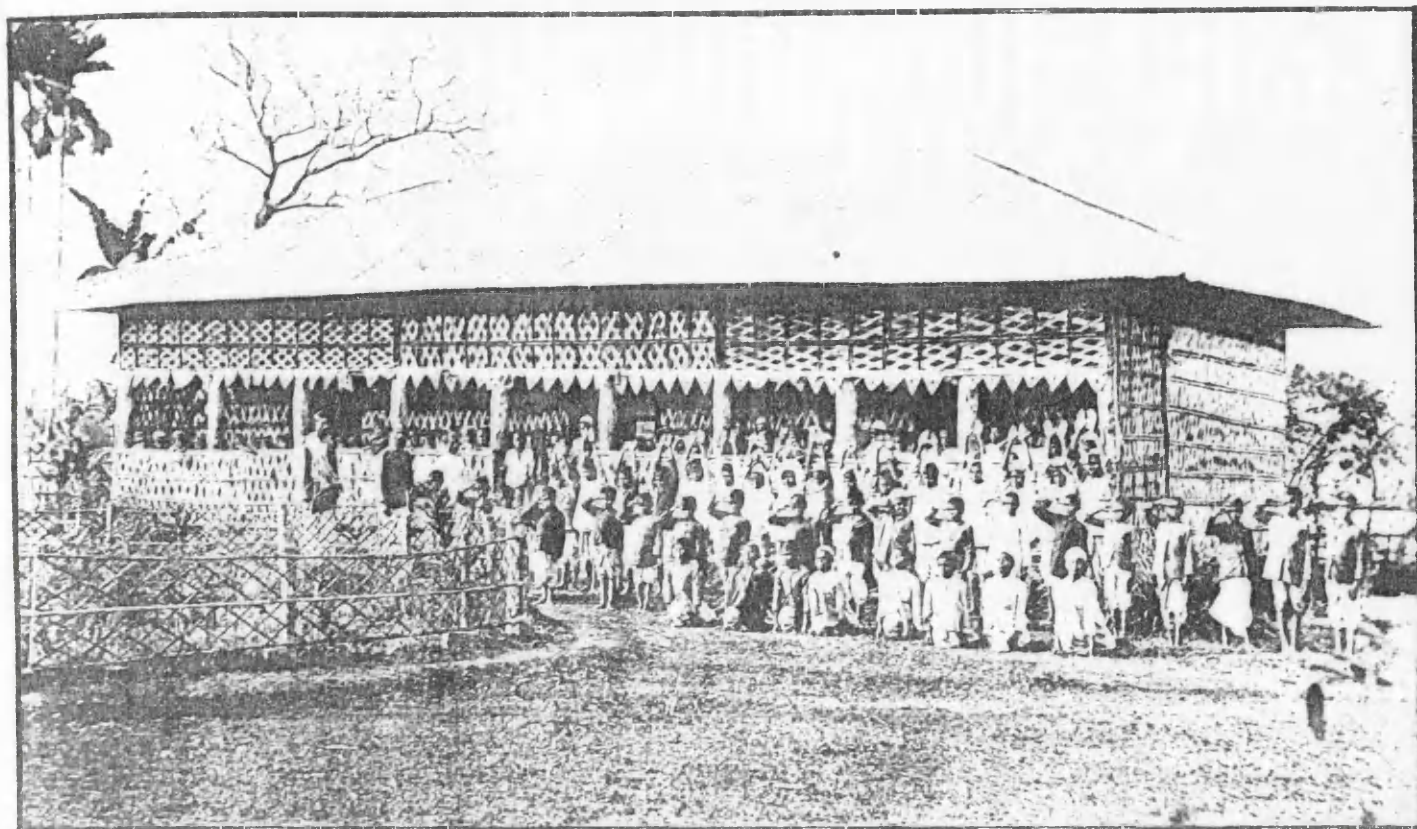


Photo. Mar. 1891, Thon. No. 100, Boars &

The scheme suffered from other defects - in many cases the local public showed little interest; District Boards, on the other hand, were often unable to provide money for keeping the school house in proper condition; the pay of the teachers was low. The slow progress, in some cases, rendered the scheme out of step with other related measures. For example, the Bengal Village Self-Government Act of 1919 created a new unit of local self-government, the Union Board, which began to replace the existing Panchayati Unions. Then again, these Panchayati Union Schools were started on the basis of a three year Lower Primary course but the revised primary curriculum introduced in 1923, provided, in place of two courses covering six years between them, a uniform, unbroken course lasting five years. The old division of Primary Schools into Upper and Lower thus became obsolete, but the Panchayati Schools found themselves unable to reach the full five year course without additional funds, which were not forthcoming.<sup>1</sup>

However, despite many defects, the scheme was the first attempt in the history of the province to give the rural areas a complete network of moderately efficient schools at reasonable cost. These schools were undoubtedly far better than private primary schools, were better housed and usually better taught. Had the local bodies been in a position to supplement the income of the teachers, the schools could have attracted a still better type of teachers. As it was teachers often got more in aided schools, partly through their own efforts in encouraging more children to come to school, but often because the Panchayati School had not been well sited. That a site could conveniently be spared often weighed more with the local authority than the convenience of the pupils.

Clearly, to tackle the problems of mass illiteracy something more definite, a positive programme backed by adequate funds was needed. Doubtless, the number of schools and of pupils in them was rising but the increase was not even proportionate to the increase of population. The census figures showed that while the number of literates was slowly but steadily rising

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1. BQR, 1922-23 - 1926-1927, 55.

so also was that of illiterates, the former rising from 3,311,000 in 1901 to 4,007,000 in 1921, the latter from 39,570,000 to 42,785,000 in the same period.<sup>1</sup> A vague desire for education was beginning to stir the masses but the means to satisfy this desire were almost completely lacking. Thus the proportion of schoolboys to the total male population of school-going age actually declined from 17.3 to 17 during the quinquennium 1917-18 to 1921-22.<sup>2</sup> Surveying this situation the Departmental Review observed "... there is a strong foundation of public opinion, expressible in rupees, annas and pies, upon which the fabric of a reformed primary education may be built," but the efforts made, it added, had been spasmodic, unsystematic and haphazard with far too many venture schools.<sup>3</sup> Something more comprehensive than the Panchayati Union scheme was needed.

This feeling that something should be done found expression in the Legislative Council in 1917 when Surendranath Ray introduced his Primary Education Bill to empower municipalities to levy a tax to meet the amount needed for primary schools after deducting the government grant, school receipts and other sources of income. All municipalities would be required to survey the local needs of primary education, so as to make sure that necessary funds, accommodation and other facilities were available. Thereafter they could introduce compulsion for boys within their jurisdiction. The Bill did not lay down what Government was to contribute, but a municipality introducing compulsion was authorised to remit the whole or part of the fees of poor pupils.<sup>4</sup>

It is interesting to note the reaction of the Government: "The Bill is eyewash," commented Hornell, the Bengal DPI.<sup>5</sup> Its only useful outcome would be to get people used to the idea of compulsion. The ordinary mufassal municipality, he said, was and must be poor. Hornell's comment on Ray's bill was unduly cynical for it was steadily pushed through to enactment in 1919, but his

1. ISC, VIII, 24.

2. BQR, 1917-18 to 1921-22, 35.

3. Ibid.

4. ISC, VIII, 25; Hartog Report, 266-67.

5. Hornell, Note, 28 Sept 1917. GB-Gen-Edn, I-B 1-2. A1-3. Dec 1917.

comment on the poverty of the municipalities was more justified. The 115 Bengal municipalities, excluding Calcutta, had a total income of around Rs. 60,00,000, or less than Rs. 3 per head of their population a year.<sup>1</sup> Of this sum Rs. 2,50,000 went on education as a whole and Rs. 1,10,000 of that was primary education's quota, among all the municipalities of Bengal. Virtually all this went in grants to private schools, for there were only eight primary schools entirely maintained by municipalities in the whole province.<sup>2</sup> Expenditure on primary education was kept thus pitifully low despite the ban on any expenditure on other forms of education until the needs of primary education had been fully met,<sup>3</sup> for there was much evasion of responsibility as well as poverty. Chittagong thus spent some Rs. 3,000 a year on primary schools, out of an educational budget of nearly Rs. 21,000. The important municipality of Burdwan was even worse, spending on average only Rs. 1,000 on primary education, and in 1916-17 as little as Rs. 591 from an educational total of Rs. 22,690.<sup>4</sup> That they were typical rather than exceptional is demonstrated by the following table :

<u>Municipality</u>	<u>Total income</u>	<u>All education</u>	<u>Primary education</u>	<u>Schoolage Boys</u>	<u>At School</u>
Suri	Rs. 11,000	830	530	736	377
Asansol	55,000	1,600	1,120	1,872	514
Malda	16,000	760	470	1,154	668
Rangpur	56,000	5,000	380	-	-
Bogra	3,900	3,900	950	793	556
Rajshahi	43,000	1,700	1,140	1,958	862
Natore	12,000	1,100	850	675	343

Source : Uncatalogued DPI papers, West Bengal State Archives.

Of the above municipalities Bogra was singled out as being especially advanced. More than seventy per cent of the boys of school-going age actually attended the town's twenty-seven primary schools. These schools were fairly evenly distributed, they were reasonably supported with average grants of Rs. 12-8 per month, and two were good examples of efficient schools, with

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1. GB-Gen-Edn., In 1914-15 the municipal population of Bengal was 2,178,115.

See GB-Gen-Edn., I-B 1-2, A1-3, Dec 1917.

2. BAR, 1917-18, 37-39.

3. Hornell, Note, 28 Sept 1917. GB-Gen-Edn., I-B 1-2, A1-3, Dec 1917.

4. Ibid.

staffs approaching the standard advocated by the Department of Education.

The possibility of effective compulsion said the report, "is not therefore remote. The local gentry are extremely enthusiastic on educational matters, and very sound and reasoned in their general views." Yet to bring in free, compulsory primary education such as was ultimately contemplated in Surendranath Ray's Bill, would have cost Bogra Rs. 3,111 in initial capital outlay and Rs. 5,268 a year recurring, while its current expenditure on all levels of education was only Rs. 3,900, and on primary education some Rs. 950 a year.<sup>1</sup>

Admittedly the record of the Bengal municipalities in discharging their responsibilities for the education of the masses was not a bright one - even Bogra devoted 60 per cent of its educational expenditure to Middle English Schools<sup>2</sup> - but this was very much a part of a general picture of lack of initiative, of civic sense, and, critically, of funds. "Most of the municipalities away from the Hooghly", says one Report, "consist of rural villages, the administration generally is feeble. Usually there are many more miles of metalled road than can properly be maintained, and, save a latrine service of varying efficiency, almost none of the ordinary conveniences of municipal life are available. Unfortunately too, the administration of many of these municipalities is in the hands of Commissioners, who are generally non-resident, but who take a great deal of trouble to obtain posts, the duties of which they cannot discharge. In other cases the most influential local resident is the successful candidate for the post of Chairman and, having obtained it, leaves everything to the Vice-Chairman or the office-staff, which in too many cases becomes the real local executive, with evil results."<sup>3</sup>

However nondescript the performances of these municipalities might have been, they did not fare badly by the side of their big sister, the city of Calcutta. Under the Calcutta Municipal Act in force in 1917, the Calcutta Corporation might in their discretion provide funds for the promotion of

1. Uncatalogued DPI Papers, West Bengal State Archives. One of the schools thus commended had four teachers for five classes.

2. Ibid.

3. BAR 1917-1918, 42.



primary and technical education and free libraries, but the expenditure was purely discretionary.<sup>1</sup> Astonishingly Calcutta, the first city of India and second city of the British Empire, with a population in 1917-18 of nearly a million (287,867 literate) and an annual income of Rs.12,318,132<sup>2</sup> (almost one-fifth of the revenues of Bengal) spent less than eighteen thousand rupees a year on primary education in the city.<sup>3</sup> It had 464 primary schools, including maktabas, with 24,000 pupils - but all of them were under private management. The premier city of India could not boast of a single primary school of its own. Nearly half of Calcutta's school-age children, 5 - 15 olds, were under instruction in the city compared with a quarter in the rural areas of the Presidency Division, but of these children about 42,000 were in secondary schools as against the 24,000 in primary schools, and all in institutions which were the result of private enterprise.<sup>4</sup> As only some 2,000 pupils from the primary schools of Calcutta went on to secondary schools it might safely be said that primary education in Calcutta, as conducted in the primary schools proper, was an end in itself, and was not preparatory to the work of the High or Middle Schools. "The latter institutions had their own primary or preparatory sections (though) while primary schools in Calcutta catered for those who did not advance to higher stages of study, their courses had been modified by the

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1. GB-Gen-Edn.,  $\frac{IE}{3}$  1-9, A16-28, July 1917. The first draft of the Act of 1888 did not contain even these provisions which were inserted on the motion of Gurudas Banerjee during the discussion of the Bill. There was considerable opposition to Banerjee's motion, only carried by the President's casting vote. A more comprehensive provision for the maintenance, support and inspection of schools, including technical schools, proposed by Alfred Croft, was rejected. In 1901, the Corporation, urged on by the Government of India's adverse comments on its performance, raised its grant to primary schools to nearly ten thousand rupees. There were exemptions granted to many institutions from rate-paying, the missionary institutions getting the lion's share, but few of the exemptions went to primary schools or departments.

2. BAR, 1917-1918, 43-45.

3. T.O.D. Dunn, Report, Feb. 1918. GB-Gen-Edn., IE-2, A1-10, April 1919. The educational expenditure of the Corporation was as follows :

	<u>Direct grant</u>	<u>Exemption from rates</u>
Secondary	Rs. 9549	3737
Primary	17718	85
Technical	2279	-
Miscellaneous	1800	-
European	4210	22677

4. Ibid.

influence of the secondary school. In the majority of these schools some English was taught.<sup>1</sup>

The Government grant for primary education in Calcutta amounted to less than Rs. 33,000 distributed over 413 institutions, 51 being unaided. The average grant per school from Government was Rs. 7 and from the Corporation Rs. 4 a month, as compared with the Rs. 13 received from fees. Even with fees ranging from Rs. 2 to as little as 1 anna a month in Calcutta the total fee income was approximately Rs. 70,000 per annum, more than the combined total of Government and Corporation spending on primary education in the city. The average monthly school income from all sources was thus Rs. 26 out of which the rent of the premises, averaging Rs. 8, had to be met, and in certain cases the profits of the proprietor of the school. The schools lacked capital funds for furniture or equipment. The school thus "... struggles into life without any chance of carrying on sound educational work in a suitable environment".<sup>2</sup> K.C. De appointed in 1914 to survey the schools reported them to be in miserable condition, lacking accommodation of their own and so generally held either on the verandah of a house or in a small and unsuitable room hired by the teacher. He, in most cases, was also the proprietor and with his limited income could not afford to provide more accommodation or equipment.<sup>3</sup>

More of the city schools were multi-teacher than was the case in the countryside. But of the total of 711 primary school teachers 586 were untrained and more than half had passed no examination. Nor did the Corporation do much to provide a training : there was only one Guru-Training School, at Kalighat, which admitted sixteen pupils per year.<sup>4</sup> As T.O.D. Dunn reported in 1918, "On the whole the lot of the city teacher is worse than that of his mufassal brother. The latter has at least the products of the soil for himself and a position of modest dignity in his remote village."<sup>5</sup> With an

1.T.O.D. Dunn, Report, Feb 1918. GB-Gen-Edn. IE-2, A1-10, April 1919.

2.Ibid.

3.K.C. De, Report, 13 Nov 1915. GB-Gen-Edn.  $\frac{I-E}{3}$  1-9 A16-28 July 1917.

4.Dunn, Report, Feb 1918. GB-Gen-Edn. IE-2 A1-10 April 1919.

5.Ibid.

average pay of only Rs.10 to Rs.15 it was no wonder the pandit "drags through whatever ... part of the syllabus he can understand and is but little ahead of his pupils in knowledge of the three R's. Where the teacher has a smattering of English, he tries desperately to impart some instruction in the coveted language when the inspecting officer is not on his particular beat." The survey thus concluded "primary education in Calcutta is not only inadequate in extent but almost worthless in itself."<sup>1</sup>

1. In view of the fact that less than ten percent of primary school children in Calcutta went up to secondary schools it is interesting to see the facilities for vocational education available to the poor children of the city.

I N C O M E								
Name of Instit- utions	Subjects taught	Number of pupils	Standard of school education	Govern- ment Rs	Muni- cipal Rs	Fees Rs	Total Rs	Expend- iture Rs
Maharaja of Kassi- mbazar Polytech- nic	Carpentry Smithy Tailoring	30 3 15	Matric (optional)	-	-	251	807	807
Calcutta Orphanage	Carpentry Tailoring	37 85	L.P.	30	7		78	78
Bengal Social Service League	Tailoring Leatherwork	23 3	L.P.& English			28	190	190
Deaf & Dumb School	Tailoring Fretwork	17 6	U.P.				60	60
Workman's Institution	Bookbinding Emblem making	5 1	L.P.				79	70
Labhchand Motichand Free Ind- ustrial	Jeweller's work	18	H.E.				325	200
Anjuman- E-Rafique- Islam	Hatmaking Tailoring	15 19	Maktab	30	2		80	80
Calcutta Blind School	Basketmak- ing Canework	34	H.E.	150	125	60	1135	720
Muhammadan Orphanage	Tailoring Embroidery Bookbinding	5 2 1	H.E.	125	140		525	525
TOTALS		319		335	27	339	3179	2730

GB-Gen-Edn., IE-2. A1-10. April 1919.

The "inadequate and worthless" nature of the primary education of the city had been exercising the minds of the education authorities of Bengal for some time. Their first move had been to appoint two ICS officers, K.C. De and J.N. Roy to conduct a survey of the city's educational problems in 1915-1916. Thereafter C.F. Payne, the ICS chairman of the Corporation, was pressed for action by the Education Department. He took shelter however behind the law and the inadequacy of funds. Referring to the frequent comparison between the educational expenditure of the Bombay Corporation and that of Calcutta<sup>1</sup> Payne maintained that the difference sprang from the laws being different: Section 61 of the Bombay City Municipal Act made it incumbent on the Corporation to make adequate provision for maintaining, aiding and suitably accommodating schools for primary education while the Calcutta Act was permissive only. Thus "what is merely a secondary and discretionary function of the Calcutta Corporation is a primary duty in Bombay".<sup>2</sup> The grants of about Rs. 4,34,000 per annum which the Bombay Corporation received from the Government were not given for educational purposes, but they were, claimed the chairman of Calcutta Corporation, almost exactly equal to the amount which Bombay Corporation spent from its general revenue on education. The Commissioners of Calcutta Corporation would be happy to co-operate with Government, Payne said, but added that "they are not in a position to undertake the primary responsibility for the provision and maintenance of schools, nor do they consider that the intention of the law is that they should do so".<sup>3</sup> On 13 March 1915

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1. M.P. West, Survey of Primary Education in Bengal, 1919. GB-Gen-Edn. IE-7 A191-95, Dec 1919. In the Appendix to this report a comparison is made between two suburbs, Bandra in Bombay and Tollyganj in Calcutta. With roughly equal numbers of school-age children Bandra had two and a half times as many at school, and of the schools most were municipal whereas in Tollyganj all were private. The pupil-teacher ratio was much the same in Bandra and Tollyganj, though the schools in Bandra were twice as large, but teacher salaries and expenditure per pupil were twice as high in Bandra as in Tollyganj: the average Bandra salary, Rs.20 was higher than the highest in the range of salaries in Calcutta.

2. C.F. Payne to Secretary, Education Dept., Bengal, 31 May 1916. GB-Gen-Edn., IE 1-9 A16-28 July 1917.

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3. Ibid.

there had already been a private motion asking for more funds for primary education, which the DPI had countered with the argument that more information was still needed before an appropriate scheme could be worked out - especially since Calcutta Corporation unlike other Bengal municipalities lacked an educational authority capable of taking charge of primary education.<sup>1</sup> Now, after Payne's disclaimer, Government proceeded to appoint another committee, under T.O.D. Dunn, to survey Calcutta's needs. His report, submitted in February 1918, stressed two points "improvement of primary schools for about 30,000 children who read in primary schools proper - and the creation of primary schools for about double this number." There was serious congestion: 10,000 children needed to be removed from overcrowded schools and put into new ones, and many bad schools needed to be replaced. For the improvements required Dunn suggested a bill of Rs.18,23,500 for capital and Rs.8,50,000 a year recurring expenditure - this for boys' primary schools only.<sup>2</sup> The Government and Corporation did prepare a scheme, involving the establishment of 16 new primary schools and the improvement of 28 existing schools at a capital cost of Rs.20,35,000 and an initial recurring cost of Rs.1,30,000 rising to Rs.4,25,000 (half the sum proposed by Dunn). Since the current Government grant for primary education was only Rs.32,644 a year the Corporation asked that Government should meet half the capital and recurrent costs of the scheme. To administer education a joint committee, Government and Corporation, should be set up.<sup>3</sup>

The scheme foundered however on the rock of finance. L.S.S. O'Malley, the Secretary of the Bengal Education Department, wrote, "we are constantly talking of expanding and improving primary education and the scheme now put forward is a practical opportunity of giving effect to our wishes", but then went on to voice his doubts about the Government's ability to meet the recurring cost.<sup>4</sup> Seven months later doubt gave way to pessimism when he noted again on the file

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1. See The Collegian, 2 March 1915, 176-7.

2. GB-Gen-Edn., IE-2, A1-10. April 1919.

3. GB-Gen-Edn., IE-15.A9-15. March 1920. Government proposed to meet three-quarters of the capital costs of the scheme, and most of the cost of a proposed teacher training college.

4. L.S.S. O'Malley, Note, 15 May 1919. GB-Gen-Edn., IE-15 March 1920.

dealing with the scheme, "our prospects under the new financial settlement are gloomier than when the question of financing the scheme was first discussed."<sup>1</sup> The proposal was shelved.

Meanwhile Surendranath Ray's Primary Education Bill, first introduced in December 1917 in the Bengal Legislative Council, had been published and opinions invited. Then West presented his report on primary education, not a very clear analysis, but striking in its proposal to abandon the system of aided schools and to replace it by a complete system of schools owned and managed by local authorities, who should have the power to close private schools which were superfluous and damaging to the public system.<sup>2</sup> His report seems to have influenced the Select Committee appointed by Government to review Ray's Bill, however, for of the two significant changes they made one was to empower Government to require a municipality to take over the management and control of all primary schools in its area and to provide for all children between 6 and 11 - subject to the municipality's financial capacity. (The other change was to provide for the levy of an educational cess.) Thus modified the measure was passed by the Bengal Council on 27 March 1919.

The Act was potentially a very powerful instrument of change and its passing as a private measure was a considerable achievement. Yet not one of the powers it gave was exercised by any municipality or Government until late in 1927. It thus became a monument to the inefficiency of Government, the equivocation of the Council and the indifference of the educated classes towards primary education. That indifference was of long standing. When Gokhale's Primary Education Bill was under discussion in the Imperial Legislative Council, the Syndicate of Calcutta University, while paying lip service to the extension of mass education, had hastened to cast doubt on the desirability of compulsion and the taxation it would require. While colleges

1. L.S.S.O'Malley, Note, 17 Dec 1919. GB-Gen-Edn. IE-15. A9-15 March 1920.

2. M.P. West, Survey, 1919. GB-Gen-Edn., IE-7. A191-195. Dec 1919. West here followed Dunn who had proposed the abolition of the aided school system in rural areas - which provided too little discipline and control - in favour of a district board system. GB-Gen-Edn., IE-20. A2-5 May 1920.

and secondary schools were still inadequate no funds ought to be diverted from their improvement and legitimate expansion, they said.<sup>1</sup> The message was repeated next year in his convocation address by Asutosh Mookerjee, who criticized "The so-called paramount claim of adequate provision for universal primary education before any increase of expenditure on higher education and research."<sup>2</sup> Asutosh was speaking from the stronghold of the bhadralok but they were also well entrenched in the municipalities and district boards too. In 1918, as Tinker notes, "the vote was enjoyed by only 6 per cent of townspeople and 0.6 per cent of the rural populations."<sup>3</sup> The franchise was firmly based on property and educational qualifications and those who enjoyed it - landowners, educated middle classes and businessmen - rarely relied upon public primary schools for the education of their children. Their concern was with secondary and college education. Wordsworth, the DPI, answering a Government of India query about Bengal's plans for primary education replied: "there has been little real interest in the spread of primary education in Bengal: the professional classes, who compose District Boards and Municipalities, are interested rather in secondary education."<sup>4</sup> B.C. Mahtab, Maharaja of Burdwan, member of the Bengal Executive Council agreed, admitting that Government's contribution to primary education "has been like a fleabite in comparison to what we have been spending on secondary and university education."<sup>5</sup>

Government had, in fact, been very wayward in its handling of primary education. When asked to produce a <sup>e</sup>scheme for primary growth in 1918 on the lines of the Government of India's plans to double school places for boys in

1. Syndicate, Resolution 20 May 1911. GI-Edn., A78-79 July 1911.

2. See The Modern Review, April 1912, 455. The Review found the remark "totally uncalled for".

3. H. Tinker, 109.

4. W.C. Wordsworth, Note, 28 Dec 1918. GS-Gen-Edn., IE-20, A2-5.

5. B.C. Mahtab, Note, 20 Dec 1918. Ibid. Dunn's social and economic survey of the wards of Calcutta brings the same point out very clearly. Ward IX, described as 'Bhadralok class, Hindu population predominates; a proportion is inhabited by Muslims', has 970 pupils in primary schools, 441 in makhtabs and 4899 in secondary schools. Ward XXI, 'Mainly low class Hindu and Muslim - the rest Hindu bhadralok' sees the situation reversed: 1,370 children in primary schools, 545 in makhtabs and only 483 in secondary schools.

ten years, the Government of India to meet one-third the cost, Ronaldshay as Governor had to admit that the province seemed to have no policy<sup>1</sup> while the DPI claimed that the Education Department lacked the resources, "to dominate the situation and work out a comprehensive scheme of advance"<sup>2</sup>. But as L.S.S. O'Malley pointed out the poverty of the primary section was due to overspending on higher education,<sup>3</sup> though this was scarcely a full explanation in a year when Bengal had an accumulated balance of Rs.1,17,00,000 under Imperial grants for education. For Surandraneth Ray's Bill there was the most tepid welcome - Bengal believed that the Bill would remain a dead letter, but they did not oppose it as it would "help affirm the principle that the provision of primary education is a duty incumbent on municipalities "<sup>4</sup>. It was rather in the same mood that Ronaldshay over-rode O'Malley's doubts about whether to support the Bill or not, by noting "If it does not provide us with a programme, it at least provides us with a policy."<sup>5</sup> Earlier the Senate and the Indian Association had agreed that the Bill, if enacted, would remain a dead letter - when it was passed, University, Corporation, municipalities and Government seemed happy that it should remain so.

For the moment the Government thus dodged the issue. The problems, although it was no new one, was of immense difficulty and complexity. Not only was primary education of inferior quality but it failed to reach the great mass of the people. No more tinkering would do, nor could any great progress be made without expenditure on a scale altogether different from the existing inadequate allotments. Apart from the insufficiency of funds progress had also been slow because the further the system extended the more difficult were the regions into which it penetrated. The village schools had been mainly used by the children of the more affluent tenants and cultivators who wanted some teaching for their children and could make a contribution towards it. Further

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1. Ronaldshay, Note, 23 Dec 1918. GB-Gen-Edn., IE-20, A2-5, May 1920.

2. Wordsworth, Note, 28 Dec 1918. Ibid.

3. O'Malley, Note, 3 Jan 1919. Ibid.

4. Hornell, Note, 28 Sept 1917. GB-Gen-Edn., <sup>I-8</sup><sub>5</sub> 1-2. A1-3. Dec 1917.

5. Ronaldshay, Note, 28 Jan 1919. GB-Gen-Edn., IB-1. A15-22. July 1919.



expansion must be among the very small cultivators, the landless labourers, the lowest castes and the inhabitants of the most remote and backward localities whose desire for education was as weak as their means were scanty. Yet to reach them, expansion of funds and organisation was necessary on a scale beyond the existing resources of the Government and the local bodies. The survey by M.P. West showed that for a comprehensive scheme, paying teachers as low an average salary as Rs 15 per month, an annual expenditure of two crores would be required. At this time the total Bengal expenditure on primary education was less than half a crore, of which a little over one-third (Rs 17 lakhs) was contributed by Government.<sup>1</sup> The total revenue of the Bengal Government in 1917-1918 was well below eleven crore, that of the district boards was a little over one crore and the municipalities, eighty three and a half lakhs.<sup>2</sup> West's estimate provided for the first time a rough idea of the magnitude of the problem.

This period also witnessed a growing realisation of the political importance of the role of primary education. Montagu's declaration of August 1917, setting out "progressive realisation of responsible self-government" within the British Empire as India's goal, clearly envisaged a greatly extended electorate, which the Government of India Act duly created.<sup>3</sup> But the rate of progress towards a democratic form of government would largely depend on the growth of a popular electorate capable of voting wisely and informedly, which in turn implied the spread of literacy among the masses. Such expansion under the existing voluntary system was bound to be slow and uncertain. The solution appeared to lie in compulsion, advocated by West and provided for in the Primary Education Act of 1919.

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1. ISC, VIII, 25.

2. BQR 1917-1918, 104, 48-49, 37-39.

3. "In place of the 28 members of the old Legislative Council elected by 9,000 educated and propertied voters, there were now to be 113 elected members with a total enfranchised population of more than a million, of whom the majority would be peasants." Broomfield, 129. The bhadralok, as Broomfield points out, had opposed the extension of the franchise and asked for weightage for the towns and no special representation for the lower castes and Muslims. Broomfield, 160.

General compulsion on all children was ruled out as impracticable by the Government of India which preferred a "general compulsion on all local bodies throughout the country to provide facilities for the extension of primary education...."<sup>1</sup> Compelling local bodies was bound to be ineffective unless government itself supplement their efforts with more of its own funds. No municipality was prepared itself to make use of the 1919 Act. The DPI put the dilemma of the Government in sharp relief "we shall make no advance in Bengal in this matter until Government has power to compel local authorities to contribute their share ... a necessary preliminary to any further action is to decide how much the Government of Bengal can spare from its own revenues." He answered himself: "Nothing." But, he went on, "We ought to have a programme, clear, definite and detailed which we can place before the new Minister."<sup>2</sup> So Evan E. Biss, an Inspector of Schools, was appointed in August 1920 as special officer to prepare another report on primary education in Bengal and to suggest measures for expansion.

The report which Biss produced made it quite clear that under the new political dispensation primary education would have a political as well as an educational role to play : since the very villagers now had substantial powers of self-government the popular vote must be made an intelligent vote, or trouble and misery must result.<sup>3</sup> The echo of Robert Lowe's "We must educate our masters" was strangely clear - and his conclusions too : "I shrink from the notion of pressing education on people. It seemed more in accordance with our institutions to allow the thing to work and freely to supplement the system. The whole question is now completely changed. I was opposed to centralization, I am ready to accept centralization; I was opposed to an education rate, I am ready now to accept it .... From the moment that you can entrust the masses with power their education becomes an absolute necessity, and our system of education ... must give way to a national system."<sup>4</sup>

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1. GI to GB, Letter, 2 Sept 1918. GB-Gen-Edn, IE-20. A2-5. May 1920.

2. Hornell, Note, 13 March 1920. Ibid.

3. E.E. Biss, Report on Primary Education in Bengal, 7.

4. D.W. Sylvester, Robert Lowe and Education, 108-09.

To ensure effective literacy, said Biss, the existing system of giving grants to numbers of small private schools would have to give way to a properly organised system of publicly managed primary schools, each serving an area of suitable size, which would net the country. His Report also advocated free, though not compulsory, primary education : "The only point in favour of the levy of fees is that it is a method of financing schools to which the public are accustomed."<sup>1</sup> He recognised that the financial issue had not hitherto been squarely faced, that a transitional period of fee charging might be necessary, given the long struggle in recent years to meet an impossible situation with inadequate funds. But the principle of a cess with safeguards had been recognised in the Bengal Primary Education Act of 1919. It should now be put into practice. In support of these propositions Biss demonstrated how low the average strength of the Bengal primary school was and how small the area it served when compared with the other provinces,<sup>2</sup> and how cut price the education was and yet how high the average fees were.<sup>3</sup> Clearly though the charges were too low to permit real efficiency the proportion of the cost, two-thirds, met from fees was absurdly high. "In no great country with an extensive primary educational system is the proportion of fees to total expenditure so high as it is in Bengal, in no other province in India, even, is the voluntary contribution so great as in Bengal."<sup>4</sup> The Report then went on "... the system, even with its misdirected effort and its overlapping and rivalries of neighbouring schools does give to a certain proportion of the population a certain degree of literacy at an extraordinarily cheap rate ".

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1. Biss to DPI, 31 March 1921, 2.

2. Biss Report, 17.

3. Ibid., The report compared costs and fees in Bengal and the other Indian provinces. The annual cost per boy in Bengal was Rs. 3.5 as compared with Rs. 5.3 in Madras, and Rs. 12.7 in Bombay and Rs. 7.6 in the Punjab: the fees charged in Bengal were Rs. 1-11 but 10 annas, 12 annas and 10 annas in Madras, Bombay and the Punjab respectively.

4. BQR. 1917-1918 to 1921-1922, 40.

(The total cost of educating a boy for five years in a primary school was Rs 20) "what is given in return may not be the best of its kind, but considering its price, the marvel is that it should be so good."<sup>1</sup>

The Biss Report aimed at creating a network of primary schools all over Bengal, catering for children within about a half-mile radius. Each municipal or union board area was eventually to have one central school with ancillary schools as needed. The schools were to be controlled by these local bodies, the cost to be shared equally by Government and these bodies, the latter having the option of levying an education cess under the Bengal Primary Education Act of 1919.<sup>2</sup> Costs were to be kept down, as they had been in the past, by simplicity of equipment and the use of ill-paid labour. The cheapness of the system had depended on sweated labour - the employment of teachers on about Rs 11 a month in Board schools (Rs 18 in Calcutta) and Rs 7-8 in private schools (Rs 10 in Calcutta). West and now Biss proposed no more than to raise the minimum for teachers to Rs 15 in towns and Rs 12 plus free board and lodging in rural areas, though with a chance of rising as headmasters to Rs 30 to 40 in urban and Rs 24 in rural areas.<sup>3</sup> The Report spoke of preparing the way for making primary education compulsory within a reasonable time i.e. five to ten years. "We shall embark on an educational adventure which will call for a great ideal, a fixed purpose, a wide grasp of existing conditions, a sane policy, ingenious expedients, persuasive tongues, firm administration and sound finance."<sup>4</sup>

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1. BQR, 1917-18 - 1921-22, 40.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

4. Biss Report, 8.

The Minister for whose benefit Biss had prepared his report took charge in early 1921. Under Dyarchy a greatly extended electorate had returned a much more representative Legislative Council which enjoyed real power over education as one of the departments transferred to Indian control. But the neglected state of mass education was not yet to attract much attention from the members. As in earlier years the 1921 elections had seen the return of high-caste men, landowners and lawyers in the main, the Hindus among them very often university educated, with some Calcutta families occupying the Muslim seats. They were not of the class to be concerned with primary education, apart from a handful of Muslim agriculturalists from northern and eastern Bengal. Replying to criticism of his budget, P.C. Mitter, the Education Minister, pointed out to the Council that on 13,40,000 primary pupils Bengal had spent about Rs. 43,27,579 in 1920-1921 out of which provincial revenues had contributed Rs.14,36,376, local funds Rs. 6,42,308, municipal funds Rs. 84,699, fees Rs. 18,11,158, endowments Rs. 4,497 and other sources about Rs. 3,50,000<sup>1</sup> Fees contributed more to primary education than the Government and local bodies' contribution was even more inadequate. But to his dismay Mitter found both the public's and local bodies' response to the Biss report disappointing. Public opinion generally criticised the scheme as expensive and it generated little enthusiasm among local bodies who were reluctant to share the cost or levy a cess.<sup>2</sup> Mitter while accepting the principle of the report looked therefore for some more modest immediate plan.

Mitter asked local bodies to put up their own, less expensive scheme. But he laid down five conditions : that teachers be paid a living wage, that schools must be housed in sanitary, well ventilated structures, though they need not be pucca, that schools be properly distributed, that children be concentrated into larger schools and that the local body shoulder half the cost. He added that though Government would not impose universal free primary

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1. BLCF. Speech, P.C. Mitter 11 July 1922, 439.

2. For evidence of such reluctance see GB-Edn., 3P-5. B764-794 B July 1927.

education, it would reserve the right to insist on half the boys being taught free. On the other hand Government would contribute Rs 300-400 towards each schoolhouse.<sup>1</sup> The Minister adopted this policy, it was said, because "there was nothing better in sight, and it was rightly judged that very few local bodies would be willing, whether by levying a cess or otherwise, to find even half the cost of providing for primary education on a large scale."<sup>2</sup>

It has<sup>d</sup> been a singularly unpropitious time to have considered the introduction of free primary education, sacrificing a large fee income and deliberately creating a large gap to be filled by cesses or government grants. The new reformed Government had started its career with a two crore deficit, and its income declined from Rs 11,11,74,000 in 1920-21 to Rs 9,87,82,000 in 1921-22.<sup>3</sup> Had local bodies adopted all the Biss proposals Government would not have been able to provide its half share of the costs. Nor were the Ministry - or the local bodies - prepared to approve new taxation when they were everywhere fighting to survive under bitter nationalist attack. As Hornell saw, to some extent Government and the local authorities were engaged in a game of mutual bluff.<sup>4</sup> It is perhaps surprising therefore that some progress was made upon the lines suggested by Biss. Thus the Rangpur, Berhampur and Budge Budge municipalities accepted the scheme entirely and others experimented with one or two schools only.<sup>5</sup> In Rangpur in 1921 the municipality decided to levy a 1.6% educational levy which yielded Rs 5,600. To this they added Rs 400 from the ordinary income and claimed from the Government the Rs 6,000 counterpart to provide six free primary schools.<sup>6</sup> Towards the end of 1927 Chittagong Municipality, having provided the necessary accommodation for all boys of schoolgoing age, obtained the distinction of

1. BLCP, II July 1922. Speech by P.C. Mitter, 440.

2. ISC, VIII, 25-26.

3. Resolution No 3346 Edn, 20 Nov 1923. BQR 1917-18 to 1921-22.

4. Hornell argued that it was not only money which was lacking: "apart from the crippling problem of funds, Government had no organisation, even, for dealing with the complicated and urgent problem of primary education".

GB-Edn., 3 P-5.B 764-794, July 1927.

5. BQR, 1922-23 to 1926-27, 56-57.

6. GB-Edn., 1A-1. 860-84. Jan 1927. The Mahiganj Ratepayers' Association protested against the cess. This area was chiefly inhabited by wealthy banias.

being the first place in Bengal to introduce the principle of compulsion for boys. Altogether, by the end of 1927, in about sixty municipalities and union boards, the Biss Scheme had come into operation, wholly or in part, with 223 'Biss' schools sanctioned and a government contribution of about one lakh a year.<sup>1</sup>

The largest and most comprehensive scheme of primary education was inaugurated in 1924-1925 by the Calcutta Corporation. The initiative resulted from historic changes in the constitution of the Corporation in 1924 brought about by the Calcutta Municipal Act of 1923. Surendranath Banerjee described the Bill as creating "a veritable Swaraj in the government of the second city of the Empire".<sup>2</sup> "The Corporation, with four-fifths of the members now elected by the rate-payers, was given wide powers, including that of electing both Mayor and Chief Executive Officer. The constitution of the Corporation had also been democratised by the broadening of the franchise, the abolition of plural voting and the admission of women into the electorate."<sup>3</sup> The Swaraj party captured the Corporation in the first election held under the new Act and its leader C.R. Das was elected the first Mayor and Subhash Chandra Bose the Chief Executive Officer. The Calcutta Municipal Gazette, the organ of the Swarajists in the Corporation wrote "The reorganisation of primary education in the city is, perhaps, the most significant token of the new spirit moving in the Corporation. As the most populous city in the country and as the capital city of a province that takes special pride in its intellectual attainments, Calcutta has reason to feel ashamed of the extent to which it has so long neglected this elementary problem."<sup>4</sup> By the end of 1927, the Corporation had created 94 free primary schools of its own with 11,561 pupils. Most of these schools having no premises of their own met in the early morning in the buildings of other schools, but they were largely attended, the minimum strength being fixed at 100. Teachers were better paid and qualified than in most other city

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1. BQR 1922-1923 to 1926-1927, 56-57.

2. ISC, VIII, 65. For a full account of the Act see Keshab Choudhuri, Calcutta: Story of its Government, 231-43.

3. Ibid., 66.

4. The Calcutta Municipal Gazette, 3 Jan 1925, 289-90.



schools and for the first time the Corporation came to employ inspectors of its own.<sup>1</sup> Compared to the previous dismal record of the Corporation it showed remarkable zeal for primary education, a record which earned warm appreciation from an otherwise not so happy Bengal Government.<sup>2</sup> By the year 1929-1930 the number of free primary schools maintained by the Corporation had risen to 219; another 443 schools were aided and the total expenditure on primary education stood at Rs.14,69,184, more than half being spent on Corporation Schools.<sup>3</sup> But these improvements, valuable as they were, barely touched the fringe of the problem. The number of pupils in primary schools (excluding those in the primary classes of the secondary schools) rose by 20.1 per cent during the years 1921 to 1927<sup>4</sup> and the proportion of boys in primary schools rose from 17 per cent to 20.5 per cent. Impressive figures, perhaps, but they meant that nearly 80 per cent of Bengal children were still unschooled.<sup>5</sup> Then again the enormous preponderance of pupils in the lowest classes remained a very serious drawback of the system, indicating a wastage as high as 70 to 80 percent, an appalling loss considering the little money that Bengal spent on primary education. In fact according to one estimate the absolute enrolment and the proportion entering Class IV, the first Upper Primary class, had decreased during the decade 1917-1927.<sup>6</sup>

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1. BQR, 1922-1923 to 1926-1927, 57.

2. ISC, VIII, 69.

3. Table V, GB-Edn., 3P-6. A15-32. Jan. 1933. The total number of school-going age was 72,415 of which 70,643 were actually receiving instruction.

4. BQR, 1922-1923 to 1926-1927, 50.

5. Resolution, Education. Ibid.

6. Hartog Report, 59. The proportions for other provinces of India were :

	<u>Number per 10,000</u> <u>of population in 1917.</u>	<u>Number per 10,000 of</u> <u>population in 1927.</u>
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Madras	44	54
Bombay	46	64
Bengal	27	21
U.P.	12	22
Punjab	20	41
Bihar and Orissa	6	14
C.P.	35	37
Assam	44	29



The figures for expenditure on primary education were equally depressing. Dunn had proposed an increase in expenditure, municipal and district, of 36 lakhs recurring and a capital input of 134 lakhs. What was achieved in those years was a 13½ lakhs increase (from Rs.54,08,000 to 67,61,000) of which Government provided only a little over 3 lakhs.<sup>1</sup> Since much of the fee increase represented an increase in pupil numbers, this meant, as the Bengal memorandum to the Simon Commission said, that "practically nothing has been done to improve the state of these primary schools and that little if anything has been done to increase the literacy of the mass of the population, and this at a time when it is estimated that 50 per cent of the electorate is illiterate".<sup>2</sup> Moreover both the proportion of the total education budget allotted to the primary sector, 15.3 per cent, and the Government share in that miserable figure, just one third, were appallingly low, even as late as 1927.<sup>3</sup> With one exception they were the worst figures for primary education in all India:

Percentages of total government expenditure on education allotted to different branches.

	University and colleg- iate educat- ion (includ- ing profess- ional)	Secondary <u>Schools</u>	Primary <u>Schools</u>	Special <u>Schools</u>	Miscellaneous (building equipment in establishment hostel, Scholar- ship etc)
Madras	10.34	11.71	42.55	14.63	20.77
Bombay	6.35	11.43	61.23	6.33	14.66
Bengal	27.87	16.87	15.30	11.34	28.62
U.P.	16.75	19.63	29.66	7.03	26.95
Punjab	11.73	34.17	16.26	7.30	30.54
Bihar & Orissa	15.86	13.12	2.10	17.24	51.68
C.P.	8.37	18.27	25.66	7.50	40.20
Assam	11.39	24.70	26.73	5.67	31.51

Source : Table CXI, Hartog Report, 261.

1. BQR, 1917-1918 to 1921-1922. XIX-XXIII, and BQR, 1922-1923 to 1926-1927, I, 136-143.

2. ISC VIII, 26.

3. Hartog Report, 258 and 260.

The Hartog Committee did not suggest that government expenditure on university education, in a province with more than 45 million people, was in itself excessive. But they found it difficult to justify a recurring expenditure by Government of only Rs 22.64 Lakhs on 17,41,500 pupils in primary schools as against Rs 31.24 lakhs on 30,450 students in colleges.<sup>1</sup> Reckoning in expenditure on buildings and equipment for university education made the disproportion still greater.

The Government Resolution on primary education (Resolution No.3222 of 25 September 1926) stated that the average annual expenditure from taxation, i.e. public funds, per student was Rs 121-10 at university, Rs 6-13 at secondary school, and Rs 1-14 at primary school.<sup>2</sup>

The disproportion was due, so Gallagher argues, to "the selfishness of upper class opinion"<sup>3</sup> in Bengal, which, for the sake of its narrow class interest, determined the lop-sided pattern of educational expenditure. The Bengal Census Report of 1921 spoke in similar terms "The smaller section is the vocal section and its importunities in the past have led the Government to devote a disproportionate effort and expenditure to forwarding secondary education, disproportionate at least by comparison with the efforts of the Governments of other countries which have turned their attention first to offer primary education to all their subjects, and only afterwards to assist private enterprise in fostering secondary education."<sup>4</sup> By the early mid-twenties opinion within the Government had definitely moved towards a re-definition of its role in the promotion of primary education. Hitherto, there had been doubts about the desirability of introducing compulsion - now doubts gave way to a determination to win over public opinion. "Education cannot be universal unless it is compulsory," argued the 1927 Quinquennial Report, "but ... compulsion will be difficult to enforce unless it has the weight of widespread popular opinion behind it. There is need, therefore,

1. Hartog Report, 258-260.

2. See Calcutta Gazette, Suppl. No 39 Resolution No 3222 Edn., 1239-41.

3. J. Gallagher, 'Congress in Decline, Bengal 1930-39', in Gallagher, Johnson and Seal, Locality, Province and Nation, 279.

4. Census of India, Bengal, V of 1921, I, 296.

not only for more schools, but for more propaganda."<sup>1</sup>

It was in the allocation of resources, however, that the changing pattern of government thinking found most concrete expression. And introducing the budget in the Bengal Legislative Council, J. Donald, the Finance Member said "For some years university and secondary education has been absorbing the lion's share of the funds available for educational expansion, ... and it has become obvious that we are spending disproportionately on higher education and neglecting the masses. We are, therefore, this year commencing a policy of increasing our funds for primary education ...."<sup>2</sup> And since Bengal's depressed finances made any substantial rise in the education budget impossible any increased allocation for primary education could only come from cutting back some other branch of education.<sup>3</sup> This was admitted by the Finance Member. Bengal had financial difficulties "but", said Donald, "we can at least make a beginning and lay down the principle that primary education is entitled to a fair share of the funds available for educational expansion".<sup>4</sup> There were other factors beside the educational, behind this calculated change of policy. The mid-twenties witnessed a growing antagonism between the two major communities of Bengal as well as a closer political alliance between the Muslims and the British in the Legislative Council and the Government. Gone were the bonds of Hindu-Muslim unity so assiduously forged by C.R. Das under the banner of the Swarajist Party on the basis of the Bengal Pact.<sup>5</sup> The main concern of Hindu politicians of all shades, was now the protection of the interests of their community.<sup>6</sup> Thus in the Legislative Council they offered strong resistance to the Bengal Tenancy Act Amendment Bill (introduced in December 1925) and to a Municipal Bill that provided for

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1. BQR 1922-1923 to 1926-1927, 58. The Report stressed "Compulsory education must, of course, be largely or wholly free".

2. BLCR, 19 Feb 1926, 171. Speech by J. Donald.

3. P.J. Thomas, 519. Between 1926 and 1930 it rose by 9 lakhs and then fell sharply.

4. BLCR, 19 Feb 1926, 171.

5. ISC, VIII, 109-110. In 1924 C.R. Das led a compact party of 47 of whom 21 were Muslims. In the general election of 1926 only one Muslim supporter of the Swarajist party secured election.

6. Broomfield, 269.

the new taxation of property holders. The interests of the high-caste Hindus were in obvious conflict with those of the Muslims, a conflict which led to rising communalism.<sup>1</sup> The British for their part badly needed Muslim support in their fight to make dyarchy work. "The absence of any lasting party division in Bengal other than those of Hindu versus Muslim and of established Government versus obstruction" made any advance in representative government difficult.<sup>2</sup> Thus in the eyes of the British the only possible line of advance lay in securing "a greater equality of influence of the two classes which are broadly represented by landlords and tenants".<sup>3</sup> With this aim the British offered their support for the Muslim politicians' attempts at social engineering.<sup>4</sup>

The year 1925-1926 marked the end of an era in Bengal politics and the effective polarisation of politics along communal lines<sup>5</sup> characterised by violence in towns and villagers and much fanaticism in the press,<sup>6</sup> the beginning of Congress decline and the emergence of a solid Muslim block in the Council which although much plagued by factionalism, was united in its determination to secure as many advantages as possible for its own community.<sup>7</sup> The Government to make Muslim support for its policies more useful also took in hand the work of organising them "to ensure the election to the Legislative Council of representatives who would vote consistently with the Government and not drift away to Hindu-dominated alliances as in the past".<sup>8</sup> But here in its work among

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1. Broomfield, 269.

2. GB-Appointment, 6-R-57, A35-38. Aug 1927.

3. Ibid.

4. Broomfield, 285.

5. Note by Nawab Mushurraf Hussain, Minister, Government of Bengal to the Simon Commission, where he pointed out "Quite recently, in the division list of the Bengal Tenancy Bill, we have seen Hindus with one or two exceptions going in a body in favour of the landlords and Muhammadans in favour of tenants. Here the interests of the Hindu and Muhammadan councillors have been found quite at variance with each other. Again, in the voting list of the Dacca University Bill, the Hindus in a body went against the Bill and the Muhammadans supported the same. This is also due to the clash of interest." ISC, VIII, 229.

6. ISC, VIII, 104-110.

7. Broomfield, 285.

8. Ibid., 271.

the Muslims at grassroot level it faced the problem of inadequate representation of the peasantry. An unenfranchised peasantry, even though organised under 'loyal' leaders, could not be of much use to the Government. The Montagu-Chelmsford reforms had given votes only to the well-to-do cultivators while the urban voters had received a weightage of five to one.<sup>1</sup> However a review of the constitution was due in 1929 and in this an extension of the franchise must be an issue. It must be a decisive one too, for the Hindus knew that any substantial extension was bound to shift voting power radically in favour of the Muslim whose case then for a larger share of seats in the Legislative Council would be irresistible.<sup>2</sup> Consequently, from the mid-twenties, while the caste Hindus opposed any extension of franchise, the Muslims demanded universal adult suffrage and an end to urban weightage.<sup>3</sup> The Bengal Government, on its part urged the Simon Commission "that in the interests of democracy" the electorate should be enlarged.<sup>4</sup>

While making favourable noises in support of an extension of franchise, both the Government and the Muslims were acutely aware of the political difficulties presented by the prevailing illiteracy of the Muslim and low caste peasant masses.<sup>5</sup> Most of the Hindu witnesses before the Reforms Enquiry Committee of 1924 had insisted that the existing franchise qualifications should be retained because of the illiteracy of the rural masses.<sup>6</sup>

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1. ISC, VIII, 137; 272-274.

2. ISC, I, 146-147, and II, 93.

3. Nawal Saijid Nawab Ali Chaudhuri, Note, ISC, VIII, 221.

4. ISC, III, 172-175.

5. The Montagu-Chelmsford Report para 127, argued that political progress must depend on the growth of electorates and the intelligent exercise of their powers. "No one would propose to prescribe an educational qualification for the vote; but no one can deny the practical difficulties which make a very general extension of the franchise impossible until literacy is far more widely spread than is the case at present." The Government of India Act of 1919 actually prescribed certain "tests" by which to judge the success of the Reforms and the degree of progress towards self-government. The spread of education was one of them.

6. Broomfield, 273.

Government was inclined to disregard this; the Chief Secretary, Leonard Birley, believed that " ... in Bengal too much is made of this theory of illiteracy ...."<sup>1</sup> He showed, for example, that Bengal had more than twice as many literates as the U.P., with roughly the same population, but only half as many voters.<sup>2</sup> "It is the fashion to decry the electorate as ignorant and illiterate and some of the witnesses who gave evidence before the Reforms Enquiry Committee even wanted to reduce the numbers of the electorate. It is in the interests of the middle class to deprecate the quality of the electorate and restrict the franchise to their class. It is in the interests of the cultivating class that the Bengal electorate should not be saddled with a reputation for illiteracy, which it possibly does not deserve. It is clearly in the interests of (1) democracy and of (2) the establishment of a system of party Government that the cultivating classes should have as much representation as their conditions deserve."<sup>3</sup> Sir Abdur Rahim<sup>4</sup> a Member of Bengal Executive Council went further : "Even if there is a great deal of illiteracy among the cultivating classes they should have the vote ... we should not countenance the attempt of any members of the middle class (Bhadralogue) to monopolise the franchise."<sup>5</sup> Birley, however, more cautious, ordered an enquiry by the District officers into the extent of illiteracy in the rural electorate for the Bengal Legislative Council. Severe disappointment was in store, for the enquiries showed that in the Muslim constituencies 61.7 percent were illiterate and in the Hindu 41.2<sup>6</sup> Birley acknowledged "I was unduly optimistic about the literacy of the electorate." The dilemma of the Government was obvious. "There

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1. L. Birley, Note, 27 May 1925. GB-Appointment, 6R-45. A16. July 1925.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

4. Sir Abdur Rahim, a former judge of the Madras High Court and a member of the Public Services Commission of 1914, was first appointed to the Bengal Executive Council in 1920. He played an important role in breaking the Swarajist alliance in the Legislative Council and later in organising Muslim support for the Government. Rahim retired from the Executive Council in late 1925 and devoted his time to organising the Muslims along communal lines. See Broomfield, 253-54, 270-71, 274-80.

5. A. Rahim, Note, 26 May 1925. GB-Appointment, 6R-45. A16. July 1925.

6. This was the result of the second enquiry, the other two had slightly different results. GB-Appointment, 6R-83. A52-61. Dec. 1926.

is very little justification for giving large powers to the representatives of one million out of 46 million inhabitants of Bengal and at the same time there is very little use in adding to an electorate which has practically no conception of the object of its own existence." What did seem clear was "the imperative necessity of losing no time in making a great advance in the quantity and quality of primary education".<sup>1</sup>

This concern for the ignorant millions did not remain confined to the higher echelons of the government. All the official witnesses in their evidence before the Royal Commission on Agriculture in India in 1926-1927 testified to the need for literacy among the masses not just to raise the level of political consciousness among them but more importantly as a means of improving the general quality of their life, as a means of self-defence against exploiting landlords, money lenders, middlemen and banias. Thus James Peddie, the Magistrate-Collector of Malda held illiteracy a main cause of the indebtedness of many cultivators. The ignorant peasants, not knowing what sort of documents they were signing, fell an easy victim to unscrupulous moneylenders and in most cases ended by losing their land.<sup>2</sup> The necessity was thus recognised by almost everybody; the question was how? Existing resources in men and money were inadequate to the task.

Government had accepted in 1926 the principle of allocating to primary education a larger share of existing and future funds: " ... our policy in the Department now ", the D.P.I. told the Royal Commission on Agriculture, "is that any new money available should be spent as much as possible on primary education. I do not say that the opinion has been recorded in any formal Government Resolution, but that is the general trend."<sup>3</sup> He provided a rationale for the change too. The bulk of government revenue came from the agriculturalists and yet two-thirds of the total government expenditure

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1. Birley, Note, 23 Feb 1926. GB-Appointment 6R-83. A52-61. Dec 1926.

2. Royal Commission on Agriculture in India, IV, 426.

3. Ibid., 459.



on education was used to benefit other classes, without return to the industry from which the money came. "We have already revolted against it (the old system) ... about two years ago, and Sir Abdur Rahim had something to do with the revolt. It has not shown itself in practice as yet because we have had no money since then!"<sup>1</sup>

The opportunity to provide machinery and funds for universal free primary education seemed to Government to have arrived when from March 1925 onward, with the constitution suspended, it resumed executive control of the education department. Officials had come to hold that taxation for primary education should be compulsory, not an option for local bodies.<sup>2</sup> And since under them there had been "but little impression on the illiteracy of the province"<sup>3</sup> a new controlling authority should supercede them. The Bill Government prepared caused a long and extremely bitter legislative struggle which divided the Council and the province into clearly defined opposing camps along communal lines.

The Bengal (Rural) Primary Education Bill was published in draft in 1926 for public comment. (The municipalities had already been dealt with by the Primary Education Act of 1919.) The objects of the Bill were : to provide a central authority for each district to control primary education ; to raise the funds necessary to go a long, if not the whole way towards universal primary education ; to provide for compulsory attendance at school.<sup>4</sup> The central authority, the District School Board, would have the District Magistrate, the District Inspector of Schools and the Subdivisional Officer as ex-officio members, plus three members for each subdivision appointed by the District Magistrate from among the members of the Union Board or Panchayats of the sub-division, plus three members elected by the District Board. After seven years the ex-officio members would disappear and election would replace

1. Royal Commission on Agriculture in India, IV, 426.

2. GB-Appointment, 6-R-57, A35-38, Aug 1927.

3. Statement of Objects and Reasons - Primary Education, 1927. Calcutta Gazette, Pt IV, 22 Sept 1927, 46. A rough draft was framed towards the end of 1925, was considered at Divisional conferences in 1926, redrafted and circulated in 1927. Again modified it was put before Council in 1928. BLCF, 5 Aug 1929, 65.

4. Statement of Objects and Reasons, Primary Education, Calcutta Gazette, IV, 22 Sept 1927.



nominated members. The Government would appoint a President from among the elected members of the District School Board. After a further two years the members would elect the President<sup>1</sup>. Thus the new District School Boards in the first instance would be, as Government admitted, "somewhat under official control."<sup>2</sup> But this was designed to combine maximum administrative efficiency with the best local experience so as to give the vast scheme a good start. After nine years of working experience official control could be greatly relaxed.<sup>3</sup>

Here was the same old Government suspicion of popular control. "It is a foregone conclusion," noted Birley, "that elective education boards would be captured by the ultra-nationalist middle-class, whether their designation be the Swarajya party or otherwise."<sup>4</sup> Birley realised that in the Legislative Council, the real struggle would be not over the cess but over the constitution of the District Education Boards. Yet who but Government could be the protector of the helpless masses? "The problems will be largely the difficulties of the cultivating class and they must be attended to, patiently. There has been nothing in the past which affords ground for expecting that these difficulties will be appreciated by an elected middle class board, or that they will be brought prominently to the notice of Government by anyone except officials ... If the cultivating classes whose interests are at stake were able to understand the problem, which they are not, there is no shadow of doubt that they would choose that the Board should be under official control. The problem is essentially their problem and not that of the middle classes ..."<sup>5</sup>

The Board's functions would be to maintain and manage schools, build new ones, administer funds and train teachers. The funds of the Board would consist of money raised by the levy of an education cess and grants from the

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1. Statement of Objects and Reasons, Primary Education. Calcutta Gazette, IV, 22 Sept 1927.

2. ISC, VIII, 28.

3. Ibid.

4. Birley, Note, 27 Feb 1927. GB-Edn, IB-1, A1-55. Oct 1927.

5. Ibid.

Government. Of the proposed cess the cultivator would pay four pice per rupee of rent paid and the landlord one pice. As this cess, which was expected to yield about one crore per annum would not touch the trader, business or professional classes District Magistrates were empowered to tax them. The Bill empowered Government to introduce compulsion in any school at its discretion, in which case education would be free. Government agreed to bear the cost of training teachers and of inspecting staff in addition to its existing expenditure on primary education.<sup>1</sup>

As expected, controversy both inside and outside the Council centered on two features of the Bill, the proposed cess and the composition of the District School Boards. Press reaction to the levy of a cess was generally welcoming, although some doubted the ability of the people to pay while others wanted the rich to pay. Thus the Mussalman was against further general taxation but supported taxing the rich for the purpose.<sup>2</sup> Forward felt that while the cess would be unfair on the poor raiyats it would be an encroachment on the permanent settlement to impose it on the landlords.<sup>3</sup> However it was the composition of the School Board which aroused the bitterest opposition. The Mussalman thought that officials in the School Board would practically dominate it and Forward asked why all this paraphernalia of supervision and control in so harmless, elementary and modest a proposal. It was the police method over again, extended to a sphere where police had no departmental jurisdiction. Could not local bodies be trusted?<sup>4</sup>

When the Bill came up for discussion in the Council lines of division soon emerged, the Hindus, the largest single group opposing and Muslims and

1. Calcutta Gazette, IV, 22 Sept 1927,66.

2. The Mussalman, 16 Jan. 1926. The paper was also concerned at the possibility of guidance and control of primary education passing almost entirely into the hands of non-Muslims, especially in the Presidency and Burdwan Divisions where few Muslims had any chance of getting elected to the District Education Committee. See also The Sanjivani, 28 Jan. 1926. The Ananda Bazar Patrika, 1 Oct. 1926; The Amrita Bazar Patrika, 2 Oct. 1926; Khadem, 17 Nov. 1926. All in BNNR, 1926.

3. Forward 1 and 3 Oct. 1926. BNNR, 1926.

4. Forward 27 Jan, 1926. BNNR, 1926.

the British, who together commanded the majority vote, supporting the Bill. Jitendralal Banerjee, for the Hindus, objected to the composition of the Board as "altogether official, altogether reactionary, altogether unsuited to the progressive tendencies of the present age ...."<sup>1</sup> He pointed out that in an average district consisting of two sub-divisions of the total number of members three would be elected and ten nominated or ex-officio. In the bigger districts the proportions would be still more inequitable. In districts like Midnapur and Mymensingh, consisting of five sub-divisions each, twenty-two members would be nominated out of twenty-five<sup>2</sup> while in an "unimportant and unprogressive" district like Bogra the proportion of elected members would be 3:9. Thus "the larger, the more advanced and important the district is in point of education the more you will be thrusting upon it a large horde of nominated members." Government did not place entire confidence even in these nominated committees, for the Divisional Commissioner could veto or hold up any particular measure. And what mischief would these officialised bodies be up to ?" ...they will try to convert these schools into loyalist manufacturing machines ... we are not going to allow your District Magistrate and your puppet school boards to mould the young idea of the country for nine long years ...."<sup>3</sup> Throughout the Bill, from first to last, there was not one word about education, complained Banerjee - "how instruction is to be imparted, how the curriculum is to be drawn up, and who are to be the final authorities for settling these points".

"Education of the Government brand - with the hall-mark of servility stamped upon it - magistrate made education" was that the kind of education with which Muslim supporters of the Bill would be satisfied?<sup>4</sup> Resentment at the unrepresentative character of the Board was also later voiced by Bijoykrishna Bose : "Government will give you C.I.D.-riddled education, but they will

1. BLCP. 9 Aug 1928, 522. Speech by Jitendralal Banerjee.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid., 524. Another mischief of these officialised boards would be to publish books written in the dialects of the different districts under the pretence that each dialect was a separate language. This had been done by officials in the case of Assamese and Oriya which Banerjee claimed were dialects of Bengali.

4. BLCP. 9 Aug 1928, 526-27.

never ... allow the control to be vested in a representative district education board."<sup>1</sup> Nalini Ranjan Sarkar likewise objected to placing "such unlimited control in the hands of an alien and irresponsible Government."<sup>2</sup> W.C. Wordsworth echoed their views, sounding what was for a member of the non-official European group a discordant note when he said "Even the European members were struck by the circumstances that while Education had become a non-official subject, and while the District Boards were now under non-official chairmen, these committees would be very largely official."<sup>3</sup>

The Muslims, although critical, were not over worried by the preponderant official element in the Boards. Since it was "Mussalmans, Namasudras and other low class demoninations of the Hindu community who will reap the greatest benefit ", said Tamizuddin Khan, "surely they have reasons to be enthusiastic over the measure. Let us not, therefore, bother ourselves for the time being as to the agency that works out the programme."<sup>4</sup> Many other Muslims voiced doubts about the official complexion of the Boards - but as Khan Bahadur Moulvi Ekramul Hoque said, " ... if they (the masses) are given education they will know what is best for them. They will not be the toy of the agitator, neither of the mahajan nor of the Zamindar; they will not even be the toy of the Government."<sup>5</sup> After all, if higher education under British control could not make the Hindus servile, why should they now fear official control of primary education ?

To the 1:4 ratio in the incidence of taxation the Hindus, with one or two exceptions, objected : "It would be an act of injustice to seek to overburden this section of the people the landlords with additional cess and that for carrying out a measure in the benefits of which they come in only remotely."<sup>6</sup> (On which a Muslim member tartly commented that "so long as the poor cultivators and day labourers have to pay for the higher education of the middle and higher

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1. BLCP. 5Aug 1929, 76.

2. Ibid., 6 Aug 1929, 112.

3. Ibid., 10 Aug 1928, 543.

4. Ibid., 10 Aug 1928, 548 and 551.

5. Ibid., 564.

6. BLCP, 6 Aug 1929, speech by Ranjit Pal Chowdhury.

classes they ... have a right to demand this from them."<sup>1</sup> Interestingly enough, the proportion originally proposed was half and half, zamindars and raiyats equally sharing the burden. That provision was modified in the Bengal Executive Council however, before the Resolution was published in 1927.<sup>2</sup> The Bengal D.P.I, asked why such a change had occurred replied "I am afraid that in my official position I must leave you to guess; it is not very difficult."<sup>3</sup> The Bill was twice referred to a Select Committee. The first Select Committee changed the proportion 1:4 to 2:3. But the Government rejected this proposal. The Education Minister Nawab Mushurraf Hossain, himself a big landlord, maintained that at one pice on the landlord's net income and four pice per rupee rent payable for the raiyats the latter would pay 1½ penny in the pound on his net income while the landlord would pay about 4 pence in the pound on his profits on land. At 2:3 the raiyat would pay about a penny, the landlord eight pence in the pound.<sup>4</sup>

The second Select Committee not only proposed a 1:1 levy but altered the whole composition of the School Board machinery, transferring from Government and the Legislative Council practically all control over primary education. They suggested a central executive body, the Primary Education Board of Bengal, controlled mainly by non-officials, with almost independent

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1. BLCP, 6 Aug, 1929. 108, speech by Abdul Kasem.

Daten commented "There is a vague public opinion ... in favour of primary education, but when it comes to a choice as to whether money should be spent on a new school or a new college, or on primary education, the whole of public opinion is in favour of spending the money on secondary and university education." And he explained that by public opinion he meant the older body of the politically active - "the lowering of the franchise qualification had not really had a chance to affect the situation much yet". Some Swarajists had enthusiastically supported the Bill in Council as representing the wishes of their constituents at the lower limit of the franchise. Whether that support would translate itself into votes he was not so sure.

Royal Commission on Agriculture, IV, 459.

2. Royal Commission on Agriculture in India, IV, 459. Evidence by E.F. Daten.

3. Ibid., 462.

4. In their notes of dissent to the Report of the second Select Committee, Bidham Chandra Roy and Malini Ranjan Sarker also maintained that 2 pice for the landlord would be oppressive. He suggested taxation on a graded scale on tenure holders or estate-holders according to their income, but a uniform rate of 3 pice for the raiyat.

BLCP., 9 Aug. 1928. Speech by Nawab Musherraf Hossain.

powers. Thus the Board might frame statutory rules without the approval of Government, while though the Legislative Council could refuse money in excess of that allocated by Government, once voted the Minister retained no control over its expenditure. The Government withdrew the Bill because as modified it granted "to a Central Committee independent of Government the whole power of directing the policy and administration of primary education."<sup>1</sup>

By proposing to hand over the control of primary education to an independent body the Select Committee showed deep distrust of Government and the Education Minister. But the Bill as amended was a bad one, as even critics of the Government plan saw. Jitendralal Banerjee argued that the amendment would hand over two crores of rupees and the entire control of primary education to a body of twenty-six persons, who, once elected, would be responsible to no one. "The members who were responsible for the introduction of this feature in the Bill evidently cherished the principle that districts are to pay and Calcutta to control."<sup>2</sup> The central committee was very much after the pattern of Calcutta University Syndicate, a body neither to be praised nor admired.

The Education Minister asked leave to withdraw the mangled Bill. His motion was carried - by a majority of three. Of the 65 Hindu members only twelve supported him, and of these, nine were nominated officials or Ministers. Of the Muslims 14, including Ministers and officials, voted for withdrawal, while 17 opposed. The European members, however, helped carry the day.<sup>3</sup>

Five months later when a revised Bill was introduced, the voting pattern

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1. BLCP, 31 March 1930, 635.

2. BLCP, 31 March 1930, 647.

3. BLCP, 31 March 1930, 661.

showed a further more clear-cut polarisation of the two communities into opposing camps. A motion to circulate the Bill to elicit public opinion was not supported by a single Muslim; evidently they were keen to pass the Bill.<sup>1</sup> Only three-elected Hindu members joined the Muslims - two of whom belonged to the Depressed Classes. The Bill was carried by 229 to 30 votes.

During those intervening five months, the Government and the Muslims had embarked on an organised publicity campaign to mobilise public opinion, particularly Muslim and low-caste Hindu, in favour of the new Bill. Thousands of copies of leaflets, both in Bengali and English were distributed in rural areas explaining the merits of the Bill.<sup>2</sup> The Education Minister and other government officials extensively toured the Muslim majority districts of Eastern Bengal.<sup>3</sup> This was the first time that organised efforts had been made to secure popular support in villages in favour of an educational measure.

Fazlul Haque opposed the taxation proposals because they were harsh on the peasantry but said that the Education Minister's tour of the Muslim districts of Bengal had created an "unprecedented enthusiasm" among them. His poor clients had asked him "not to betray the Muhammadan cause by opposing the Bill."<sup>4</sup> Many Hindus however resented the fact that the Minister had visited only the Muslim majority districts and not Calcutta, Hooghly or Burdwan, and during the discussion in Council one Hindu member deplored "the communal character" of the debate.<sup>5</sup> Communal bitterness and antagonism rose to a high pitch in both Council and Press. The Amrita Bazar Patrika warned the

1. Muslim support for an extensive system of primary education had long been voiced by a few leaders. Sir P.C. Ray, the noted Bengali chemist, educationist and ardent supporter of universal free primary education recorded that when Gokhale came to Bengal in 1910 to canvas support for his Primary Education Bill he found little support for compulsory primary education among the Calcutta bhadralok. Then he went to East Bengal where Nawab Nawab Ali Choudhury, a large Zamindar, supported the imposition of a cess for compulsory education as beneficial to the Muslim peasants. See The Royal Commission on Agriculture in India, IV, 377.

2. J.M. Sen, History of Elementary Education in India, 218.

3. BLCP, 13 Aug 1930, 238. His predecessor, Nawab Mushurraf Hossain reportedly told the Governor " ... I have set my heart upon this Bill ... I will do what my Prophet failed to do ... the Prophet gave people universal religion, he gave universal brotherhood, but I will give the people universal education ...."

4. Ibid., 238.

5. Ibid., 13 Aug 1930, 235. Speech by Rai Bahadur Dr Haridhan Dutt.

Minister that if the Bill was carried through, without such absolutely vital modifications as unofficial control, adequate financial contributions by Government and a definite date by which free compulsory education would be introduced, and this with the help of European, official and nominated members, disregarding public opinion and in the teeth of opposition from an entire community, then the country would not pardon him.<sup>1</sup> Shib Shekhareswar Ray, the Minister for Local Self-Government and a great landlord from Eastern Bengal resigned his Ministry in protest. He typified the vehemence of the Hindu opposition. "A Bill imposing a heavy financial burden on the landholders and providing for rigid official control is bound to meet with strong opposition from the Hindus," he declared, especially when "the financial burden imposed [on the landlords] is not compatible with the amount of benefit which the measure would bring them."<sup>2</sup> And the size of this landlord burden? Some Rs.28,67,000 as opposed to the Rs.83,08,000 to be shouldered by the raiyats.<sup>3</sup> Ray also heavily criticised the provision by which "... those who are educationally advanced and in whom the spirit of democracy and nationalism is highly developed"<sup>4</sup> had been left out in the cold so far as the new School Boards were concerned.

The passage of the Bill was made possible by an Anglo-Muslim alliance in the Legislative Council. This was another sore point with the Hindus. "They feel", said Ray, "that the Education Minister, in the safety of the support that has been promised by Government, by European as well as Muslim members of this Council, is riding rough-shod over the feelings of the Hindu community."<sup>5</sup> Unable to check the passage of the Bill the Hindu members walked out of the Council.

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1. The Amrita Bazar Patrika, 15 Aug 1930. BNNR. The Muslim Press if somewhat critical of officialisation, was prepared to give the measure a trial. See Dainik Soltan, 22 July 1930; The Mussalman, 25 July 1930. Mohammadi, 25 July and 8 Aug 1930. BNNR. 1930.

2. BLCP., 14 Aug 1930, 288.

3. BLCP., 13 Aug 1930, 599-600. Answer to Q No 152 asked by Fazlul Haque.

4. BLCP., 14 Aug 1930, 288.

5. Ibid., 269.



The final irony was that the Bengal (Rural) Primary Education Act of 1930, passed after years of Government hesitation, long public deliberation and strong Hindu opposition, remained like its municipal predecessor, a dead letter. The acute financial crisis of the thirties forced the Government to defer the implementation of the Act although individual local bodies did introduce some of the measures contemplated by the Act which did not require the imposition of a cess. When after the passing of the Act the Education Department asked for more funds from the Government, the Finance Department demurred. The Finance Member A. Marr noted that to implement the Act Government would not only have to advance more than Rs. 11 lakhs a year for several years before this could be recovered from the cess but would also have to incur certain definite expenditure from general revenues. At the same time the public would have to contribute one crore.<sup>1</sup> The Education Minister, Nazimuddin put up a spirited defence of his Department's claim: "If in the interest of administration of law and order Government cannot avoid spending from 5 to 10 lakhs of rupees (more) on police then I claim that from the moral and political point of view Government have no option but to find the necessary money to give effect to the provisions of the Primary Education Bill."<sup>2</sup> And pointing to the millions spent by the British Government on the unemployment dole, he argued, "In a democratic form of Government the essential demand of the people has the same claims on Government as the maintenance of law and order."<sup>3</sup> The issue was discussed in the Executive Council and it was decided to ascertain how many District Boards were prepared to implement the Act's provisions. Eight District Boards, Murshidabad, Birbhum, Pabna, Dinajpur, Chittagong, Noakhali, Mymensingh and Barisal, agreed to hand over the control of primary education to the District School Boards. They also made over the money they had been spending on primary education from their funds, while in the 1933-34 Bengal budget, Rs. 9,820 plus a loan of Rs. 65,000 was provided for the support of the eight School Boards.<sup>4</sup>

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1. A. Marr, Note, 8 June 1931. GB-Edn. A1-13, April 1932.

2. K. Nazimuddin, Note, Ibid.

3. Ibid.

4. BLCP, 25 March 1933, 531-33.

That was all, however, that Government provided towards implementing, even partially, the Education Act. Lack of money thus killed the one conscious attempt of the Government to improve the quantity and quality of primary education in Bengal. The world depression had hit the already precarious finances of the province, leading Government to cut back expenditure in all directions, as the following table shows :

<u>Expenditure on Indian Boys Primary Schools according to sources 1921-1937</u>							
	<u>1921-1922</u>		<u>1926-1927</u>		<u>1931-1932</u>		<u>1936-1937</u>
	Total expenditure	Percent- age to total expenditure	Total	Percent- age	Total	Percent- age	Total age
Government	Rs 15,16,657	33.9	17,74,820	31.7	22,03,933	32.9	26,66,798 32.9
District Board	6,04,400	13.5	7,27,857	13.0	7,22,935	10.8	10,37,182 12.7
Municipality	87,561	2.0	2,57,046	4.7	6,88,680	10.3	12,99,493 12.6
Fees	19,21,332	42.9	22,64,433	40.5	24,17,315	36.1	22,73,239 30.7
Others	3,44,861	7.7	5, 6,006	10.1	6,62,965	9.9	10,92,478 11.1
	44,74,811	100	55,90,162	100	66,95,828	100	83,69,190 100

Source : BQR, 1932-1937, I, 46.

One bright feature in this gloomy picture was the increase in municipal expenditure, both absolute and proportionate. But even this was wholly inadequate to the needs of the municipalities while the gross figure concealed the very backward condition of many municipalities in matters of primary education :

## State of Primary Education in some Bengal Municipalities (Boys only)

1929

Estimated number of school-going boys	Capacity of existing schools	Average attendance :		Class IV	Present expenditure	Municipality	Further expenditure required	Non-recurring	Years to achieve universal primary education at present rate	Additional income required for full literacy
		Class I	Class IV							
		Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.		
Calcutta	1,10,000	65,151	19,177	4,037	85,356	5,45,447	11,15,000	20,00,000	5	Not available
Bankura	4,687	2,865	861	174	8,834	3,200	55,000	1,10,000	200	87.60
Howrah	11,517	10,107	3,569	279	28,969	40,511	75,000	1,50,000	10	5.30
24 Parganas	43,827	15,601	2,488	241	19,153	27,162	490,000	980,000	300	66.96
Jessore	1,158	836	344	22	4,045	1,809	10,800	21,600	27	14.77
Bakarganj	5,285	3,609	859	464	4,499	3,567	30,000	40,000	50	6.33
Mymensingh	10,803	1,612	759	47	5,162	4,641	160,000	320,000	250	28.31
Noakhali	840	665	280		1,320	50	3,500	7,000	17	10.28
Chittagong	2,900	2,537	1,526	100	8,332	19,096	4,500	13,000	1½	2.43
Rajshahi	1,916	1,221	354	8	6,230	2,420	5,000	10,000	5	14.51
Rangpur	1,680	1,680	501	13	6,874	7,681	2,000	4,000	2	5.14
Dacca	12,811	3,343	1,554	127	14,776	10,542	65,000	330,000	75	12.61

Source : GO-Edn. IE-22. B667, May 1930. Appendix I and II.

These were "very rough approximates" only and took no account of likely increases in population. Under the prevailing economic condition of Bengal there was no possibility of any substantial rise in the income of municipalities or District Boards, especially since the bulk of district board expenditure on education of all kinds came from government grants,<sup>1</sup> a source which was inelastic too.

In Bengal the people themselves contributed a large part, well over a third, of the total expenditure on primary education. By the early thirties the catastrophic fall in agricultural prices had severely affected the people's continued ability to pay. The subsistence economy of Bengal always supported a large population, but at a low, even primitive standard of living. S.G. Panandikar, surveying the Bengal delta, could find no peasantry in Europe with a comparable living standard, not even Italy where there was a population as dependent on small scale agriculture as in Bengal. There the peasant was reasonably housed and clothed, his water supply was good, roads were metalled and streets paved and lit, medical care, midwifery and primary education were all free. In Bengal the water supply was often contaminated, sanitation was deplorable, roads were not metalled or lighted, and scarcely deserved the courtesy of being called roads, modern medical facilities and child care were almost non-existent, while schools, as has been seen, offered a rudimentary, yet not free primary education.<sup>2</sup>

Panandikar admitted that the Italian villagers had to pay for all the facilities they enjoyed - but the Bengal villagers were not in a position to do so. The evidence presented to the Royal Commission on Agriculture made that clear. Khan Bahadur Abdul Momen, Magistrate-Collector and one time Director of Land Records quoted the example of Jessore district where he found 15 per cent of the population in comfort- annual income Rs. 80 per head and no

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1. Reports on the working of the District Boards 1928-1929, Form No. II., Ibid., 1933-1934, Form No. II.

2. S.G. Panandikar, The Wealth and Welfare of the Bengal Delta, 152-154.

debts; 32 per cent below comfort - income Rs. 58 per head and Rs. 8 debt; 33 per cent just above want - income Rs. 50 per head and Rs. 12 debt; 20 per cent in want - income Rs. 35 per head and debt Rs. 30. This last class, which scarcely got two full meals a day, was rapidly growing and was becoming landless. The average annual income of an agriculturalist he put at only Rs. 54 per head or £4. a year, much less than Government spent on a convict's food, clothing and bedding in jail.<sup>1</sup> This was the taxable income on which Government and local authorities had to draw and from which school fees, by some miracle, were paid.

This appalling poverty intensified however as the impact of the depression began to work its way through in Bengal. This was reflected in primary education figures. In 1927-28 the number of schools rose by 5.3 per cent but in the following years of the quinquennium growth fell to 3.1; 2.7; .8 and 2.3 per cent respectively. In enrolment also the rate of progress was arrested: in 1927-28 the increase had been 7.6 per cent, in 1931-1932 it was only 2.8.<sup>2</sup> And although by 1931-1932, about 41 per cent of the children of schoolgoing age were actually at school, the appalling wastage in the system was clear from the literacy figures: whereas in 1921 the percentage of literate males had been 15.9 in 1931 it was only 15.75.<sup>3</sup> Literacy became effective only in the fourth primary class at the earliest, in 1931 there were in all Bengal only 118,771 pupils in Class IV<sup>4</sup>. Parents tended to withdraw their boys before they could reach the fourth class mainly because of poverty; these children were needed to supplement the meagre income of their parents by working in the fields, factories or in other occupations. These losses prevented all but a few pupils from acquiring literacy, but even of these few many seemed to relapse into illiteracy after a few years. It is impossible to provide accurate figures for this but the large gap between the

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1. Royal Commission on Agriculture in India, IV, 328. Momen put the average total value of an individual raiyat's stock - land, cattle and implements - at not more than Rs.100 and his indebtedness at more than twelve per cent of that total. See also evidence of M.L.Burrows, P.C. Ray and C.A. Bentley, Ibid.

2. BQR., 1927-1932, 20-21.

3. Ibid., 22.

4. BQR., 1927-1932, 22.

census figures for literacy and the figures for school attendance strongly suggests that the relapse was large. The number of male literates in the age group 10-15 in the census of 1931 was 398,160,<sup>1</sup> little more than a third of the five to ten year olds at school five years earlier.<sup>2</sup> The explanation lies in the unfavourable environment which the Bengal village provided. Parents were usually themselves illiterate, caste and tradition limited their expectations, and they were too poor to buy books or newspapers, even if they had felt the need to do so. The boys once their schooling was over rarely read even a paper and hardly ever saw the written word - families kept no accounts, wrote and received no letters, or very few, saw no advertisements, not even a signboard on the village shop. Religious practices and traditions too were oral. In the absence of all common aids to literacy a high lapse rate was perhaps inevitable. The social distance of the educated classes, the bhadralok, and their hostility at times to the educational ambition of lower social groups, was also a discouragement. And since village life offered so little to the educated man by way of comfort, intellectual stimulus or cultivated society, being conducted so much on the plane of traditional occupation and inherited instinct, those who did acquire an education, even at the primary level, were always tempted to desert the village for the town.<sup>3</sup> The Ninth Quinquennial Review, 1932-1937, recognised with dismay that primary school "often creates in the pupils a distaste for work on the land. It often encourages, indirectly, the drift to the towns and thus instead of being the chief force for raising the level of life and work in the villages, it even tends to lower the standard."<sup>4</sup>

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1. Census of India, Bengal of 1931, Imperial Table XIII, A.

2. BQR, 1932-1937, I, 8.

3. Though the town was much more favourable to literacy, even there much wastage occurred. One child in three failed to move up from class to class through the whole primary stage without staying down an extra year in one or other class, and though the proportion of children who completed the full five years was much higher than in rural schools there was still a considerable drop out. See BQR, 1927-1932, I, 24.

4. BQR, 1932-1937, I, 40.

Thus the losses seemed almost to balance the gains after all the exertions and plans of many years. What were regarded as faults and weaknesses elsewhere had become the characteristic features of primary education in Bengal - very low grade schools,<sup>1</sup> single teacher schools, teachers without a living wage, without a proper training, schools under no adequate control, no effective inspection.<sup>2</sup> A proper distribution of schools remained as distant a goal as ever; during 1936-1937, out of about 110,000 villages in Bengal at least 72,000 had no schools while the other 37,000 had 62,000 schools between them. To take the two largest districts, in Midnapur nearly 8,000 villages of a total of 10,800 and in Mymensingh 7,500 villages out of 10,760 had no schools of any kind at all. Nearly 60 per cent of these schools still had one teacher only and only a fifth of the schools taught the full five years' course.<sup>3</sup>

There were marginal improvements to be seen. The Biss scheme had left a small legacy of 252 improved schools in the districts,<sup>4</sup> the number of Corporation free schools in Calcutta had risen from 139 in 1927 to 229 a decade later, and their pupil numbers had doubled. They were very popular because free, but also because their teachers were well paid and competent.<sup>5</sup> Chittagong and a few more districts had introduced free education too. But otherwise the history of the post-war years might seem largely a history of wasted effort. The weaknesses in the primary education system, and the remedies, were well understood. As A.K. Chanda commented in 1937, "The sad thing is that many of these problems are old and many of the solutions offered today were offered generations ago."<sup>6</sup> The last major resolutions on

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1. In 1935 of over 64,000 primary schools only 9,900 were Upper Primary schools. See J.M. Sen, History of Education in India, 233.

2. BQR, 1932-1937, 31.

3. Ibid.

4. BQR, 1932-1937, I, 29.

5. Ibid., I, 30.

6. Ibid., I, 31.



primary education issued by the Bengal Ministry of Education under Azizul Haque in 1935 and 1937 were thus still speaking of surveying existing schools and locating future ones so as to secure an equitable spread, proposing 4 teacher, 4 class schools, hoping to pay teachers Rs. 15 a month and headmasters Rs. 20, while exempting the poor from payment of fees, and asking for funds for a thorough overhauling of the system of training for the primary school teachers. In the two resolutions perhaps the one new proposal was that compulsion should be applied on children entering the primary schools to remain until the end of the four or five year course, no child to spend more than two years in any one class.<sup>1</sup> More important both resolutions also saw more money as the essential element in progress and reform. Past policies and programmes, which took so long to prepare and push through, had foundered when the time for launching them occurred because the necessary funds were not forthcoming. In 1937 free and compulsory education was still the goal. The cost would be Rs. 5,00,00,000 a year. This, it was admitted, was way beyond the normal resources of the province. "But the largeness of the sum need not paralyse action .... After all, nations manage to find the money they need for war. A war against illiteracy has long been overdue in this province."<sup>2</sup> For that, however, a prior war needed to be fought, a war against poverty, a social and economic revolution.

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1. BQR, I, 41 and J.M. Sen, History of Education in India, 229-32.

2. BQR, 1932-1937, I, 41.

## Chapter VI

The evolution of the system of education in nineteenth century Bengal had one prominent characteristic - it was almost exclusively a Hindu-European affair : the Muslims hardly played any part in it. In pre-British days the Hindus and the Muslims had their own systems of education. During the British period both declined. But in the eclipse of higher Hindu and Muslim learning it was the decline of the madrasa rather than of the *tol* which had social significance, since it meant the eclipse of Persian as the language of administration and of the Mughal culture which Hindus and Muslims of the upper and official classes had shared.

On the ruins of the old system, the Hindus, with help from non-official Englishmen and missionaries, began to build a new one to impart western education. Their most famous institution, the high-caste, sectarian Hindu College, renamed Presidency College in 1856, opened in 1817. Many other secondary schools and colleges, with English as their medium of instruction, were to follow. The Muslims, by contrast, as William Adam noted,<sup>1</sup> showed an almost total lack of private enterprise in education, and a great reluctance to switch from Persian to English. When Muslims had appealed to Warren Hastings for assistance it was not for an English college but for a madrasa at Calcutta. And when an English department was grafted on to the Madrasa in 1827, and in 1833 extra scholarships were offered to those who included English in their courses, this was a failure. Between 1826 and 1851 the Madrasa produced just two junior scholars taking English as a subject.

In the sixties and seventies of the nineteenth century leaders such as Nawab Abdul Latif, Syed Amir Ali and Syed Amir Hossain began on behalf of Muslims to demand facilities for English education. Significantly, however, Abdul Latif chose the Calcutta Madrasa as the main agency for such education.

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1. In Mymensingh, Muslim by 5 to 2, there were no schools of Muslim learning - and no traces in Dacca either. See William Adam, Report on the state of Education in Bengal, 82,89-90.

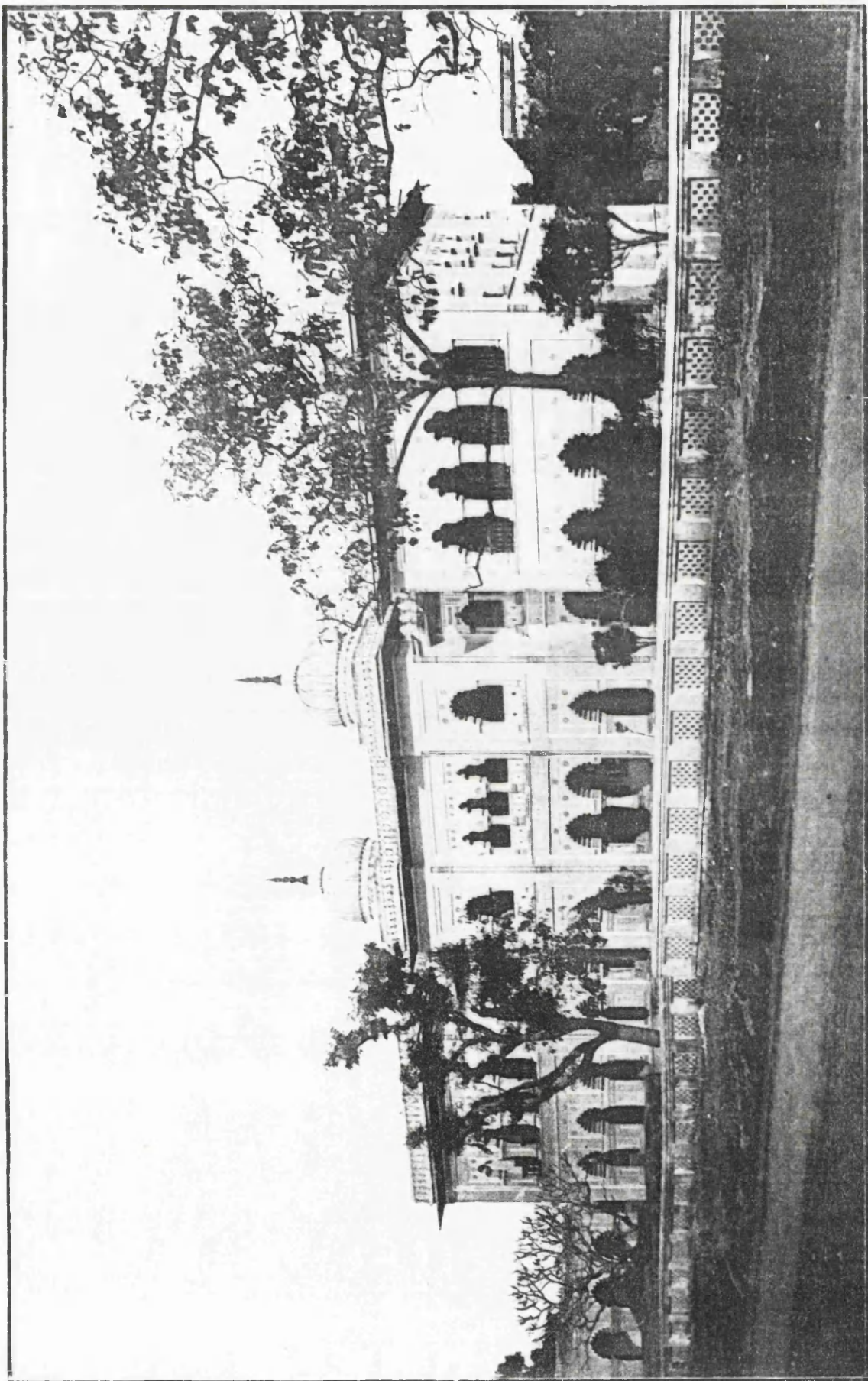


Photo. Mychi. Dept., Thomson College, Roorkee.

DACCA MADRASSA.

since the Madrassa was "looked upon by all orders of Mahomedans as peculiarly their own national place of education, and it has given them what they wanted in the way in which they wanted it."<sup>1</sup> On his constant lobbying the Bengal Government took over the Hooghly College and School, releasing Mohsin Trust funds<sup>2</sup> for the founding of three more madrassas in 1873 at Dacca, Chittagong and Rajshahi. With Syed Amir Ali and Syed Amir Hossain he founded the Central National Mohammedan Association to promote the education and political interests of the Muslims. A little later Amir Hossain put up proposals for closing some madrassas and using the money saved on new B.A. classes at the Calcutta Madrassa where teaching of English would be compulsory. All these activities demonstrate a new Muslim awareness of the vital importance of education, and of English as both subject and medium, but also a profound reluctance to break with tradition.

Government shared both the awareness and the reluctance. Sir George Campbell, for example, Governor from 1871 to 1874, held both that English education should be much the same for Muslims as for Hindus and that Muslims should have denominational schools to free them from the depressing influence of unequal competition with Hindus in Hindu-managed institutions.<sup>3</sup> A decade later the Education Commission chaired by William Hunter both sought to encourage secular subjects in Muslim schools and to make provision for religious instruction in general schools, as well as promoting the education of Muslims by special grants, scholarships and free studentships.

By the end of the nineteenth century Muslim enrolment in all types of educational institutions was rising from 28,148 under instruction in 1870-71 to 462,674 in 1901-02, though mostly in primary and indigenous schools.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Enamul Ha que, Nawab Bahadur Abdul Latif - His writings and related documents, 60.

2. Haji Muhammad Mohsin, a wealthy Shia businessman had left funds for Muslim education in the 1830's.

3. GB-Resolution, 29 July 1873. GB-Gen-Edn., 8M-4. A12-14, March 1915.

4. Momen Committee Report, 10-15.

Many of these pupils were in specifically Muslim institutions. At the primary level these were Quran schools and for slightly older children maktabas, whose main function was the teaching of recitation or reading of Quran and of Islamic rituals, with in some cases a little arithmetic and Bengali. There were twelve 'model maktabas' managed by the Government, in which more attention was paid to the three Rs. At the secondary level there were madrassas, public and private, teaching Islamic theology, law, jurisprudence and history, mainly through the medium of Urdu. At the collegiate level there was no Bengal equivalent of Aligarh, though from Ashley Eden's day Muslim students of the Calcutta Madrassa were allowed to attend Presidency College at one sixth of the usual fee.<sup>1</sup> Muslims could, of course, attend ordinary institutions run by Government or local bodies, or private, aided and unaided, but the former were very few while the latter because of their usually urban location, Hindu management and staff, lack of religious instruction and Hindu written and flavoured textbooks were either inaccessible or unacceptable to the Muslims. Given the poverty of the Muslim community it would have to be Government which undertook corrective measures.

The community to which assistance was to be given formed 54 per cent of the population of Bengal in 1921, though its geographical spread was uneven and its social composition lopsided. It was everywhere a minority in Burdwan Division, a minority in half the districts of Presidency Division, but a majority in all the districts of the Dacca, Rajshahi and Chittagong Divisions except Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri. To map Muslim majority districts was also to map the areas in which male literacy was less than 20 per cent, Bakarganj and Noakhali excepted, while Hindu majority districts showed up as areas where literacy exceeded 20 per cent, sharply so in Howrah and Calcutta. That literary skewedness in turn reflected social and economic lopsideness - the predominance among Muslims of cultivators and artisans, the smallness of their middle and upper classes.

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1. Kazi Abdul Wadud, Banglar Jagaron, 122-124.

The social organisation of the Muslims in Bengal was far less complex than that of their neighbours, the Hindus. There were two major segments : the Ashraf, the persons of good family, and the Atraf, or commoners. The former based their claim to higher status on foreign descent, their connections, real or imaginary, with the old Muslim administration, their polite speech, their dress, their occupation and life-style. But this elite was not a monolithic group : at the apex were the few big landholders like the Nawabs of Dacca, Murshidabad and Bogra, or the zamindars of Karatya, Dilduar and Dhanabari, all in Mymensingh. But the majority of the Ashraf were smaller scale landowners or jotedars, many of whom adopted the title of Syed or Choudhury.<sup>1</sup> "The majority of these people were poor yet their life style and behaviour were characterised by a sense of social superiority. In dress and cleanliness they belonged to a higher level than other social classes."<sup>2</sup> (Birth and life-style were major criteria, but wealth would over time allow upward mobility of course.) The other attribute of the Ashraf was education, the maintenance of the community's traditions of Arabic and Persian learning. Unlike the Hindu bhadralok, the Ashraf showed no passion for English education, but clung to the archaic system of maktab and madrasa. They thus cut themselves off, very largely, from Government service and the new professions, or did so until in the twentieth century a few landowning families began to give their sons an English education. Here they joined the small urban middle class of the district towns and Calcutta who were in provincial or district administration, or the Law, which was their second choice, or in teaching. (They were ill represented in the other professions.)

The mass of the Muslim community in Bengal were Atraf - peasant or artisan converts from the lower Hindu castes. They were subdivided into peasants, weavers, potters, barbers and the like, but united in having no share in higher education, Muslim or English. Upward mobility was not unknown,

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1. Abdur Rahman, Jatatuku Mane Pare, 17.

2. Ibid.

hence the popular Bengali tag : 'Last year I was a Julaha (weaver), this year I am a Sheikh, next year, if prices rise, I shall be a Sayed.' But the process required time especially in the very local societies of the Bengal countryside in which they nearly all lived.

The great exception to all the norms was Calcutta, the giant city in which half of Bengal's urban population was congregated. In greater Calcutta were found some 325,000 Muslims more diverse in occupation, status and origin than in any other region.<sup>1</sup> They included in their elite ranks members of the old Mysore and Oudh ruling families, spokesmen of the landed Muslim aristocracy, lawyers and Government servants drawn from the rural Ashraf and a group of considerable Muslim merchants, all non-Bengali, Cutchi Memons, Bohras and Ismailis, and merchants from up-country, Lucknow and Delhi. To the more aristocratic there was some doubt whether such merchants were really Ashraf. The mass of new Muslim settlers, the mill-hands, butchers, leatherworkers, tobacco dealers, cotton carders, tailors, builders, carters, ships' lascars, certainly were not. But if socially there were wide differences, the Muslims of Calcutta were all Muslims and in most cases not Bengali-speaking. At upper levels they learnt Persian and English, at lower they spoke Urdu.<sup>2</sup>

Calcutta Muslims may have had little in common with the rural masses of eastern Bengal, in class, language or occupation, but they nevertheless acted as the first spokesmen of the community in Bengal, in educational as in political matters. Government's responses were often shaped by the requirements and attitudes of the Calcutta and west Bengal Muslims - as for example when the Hunter Commission recommended that in Muslim primary and secondary schools in Bengal the principal medium of instruction should be Hindustani, with Bengali only appearing as voluntary subject added to the curriculum.

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1. K. McPherson, The Muslim Microcosm: Calcutta, 1918 to 1935, 9.

2. McPherson, 9-11. For surveys of the Muslim community and its social divisions see Census of India, Vol V, Bengal, of 1901; J.C. Jack; K. McPherson; Abdur Rahman; Abdul Mansur Ahmad, Amar Dekha Rajnitir Panchash Bachar (Fifty years of Politics as I saw It),

It was the partition of Bengal in 1905 which gave the programme of educational reform and reconstruction, for the province of Eastern Bengal and Assam more particularly, a much needed shot in the arm. Henry Sharp, first Director of Public Instruction in the new province, very enthusiastic, able and determined, soon earned a reputation among Bengalis for his pro-Muslim, pro-Eastern Bengal sentiments. His experience in Eastern Bengal later influenced his attitude and to a certain extent that of the Government of India when in 1911 he became the first Joint Secretary of the newly formed Department of Education of the Government of India.

In Eastern Bengal he arranged a special aid programme for Muslims - more scholarships at every level from Upper Primary to postgraduate and professional scholarships, and for eight per cent of all Muslim students in government and aided schools free places. There were also larger grants for the major madrassas, help for one or two Muslim High Schools and for aided maktabas and Muslim girls schools, and also more hostels.<sup>1</sup> "We have given no unfair advantage to the Mohammadans in the new province", Sharp claimed. "We have (with only moderate success) attempted to bring them into the educational services, where previously their number was negligible .... Above all we tried to make the Mohammadans feel that they were being looked after ...."<sup>2</sup> As a result there was a substantial rise in the number of Muslim pupils in primary and secondary schools in East Bengal between 1907 and 1912, the total rising from 331,900 in 1901-02 to 425,800 in 1906-07 and to 575,700 in 1911-12 an increase in the last quinquennium of 35 per cent. There was also a welcome shift in the direction of higher education : growth between 1906-07 and 1911-12 being 42 per cent at primary, 158 per cent at secondary and 407 per cent at college level.<sup>3</sup>

But of longer term significance was the attempt in both provinces to

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1 Report on the Progress of Education in East Bengal and Assam, 1907-08 1911-12, I, 81.

2. Sharp, Note, 2 Jan 1912. GI-Edn, A64, May 1912.

3. Calculated from Tables 216 and 224, Report on the Progress of Education in East Bengal and Assam 1907-08 - 1911-12, II.



refashion maktab and madrassas and to bring them within the Departmental system. Government sought a "gradual secularisation" of the essentially religious character of the maktab by introducing or strengthening teaching in arithmetic, grammar and the vernacular and geography. Meanwhile it was ruled that the maktab's religious character should not bar grants-in-aid.<sup>1</sup> Model maktab were opened in 1905 and additional financial assistance was offered to maktab which taught the full Departmental standard in Bengali, with Urdu or Persian as an additional subject. The four year syllabus for maktab introduced in 1911 was designed to bring an ordinarily intelligent boy up to standard III of the primary school, and maktab teaching it were classified as ordinary primary schools. Aid to such maktab from public funds rose from Rs 298,000 in 1913-14 to Rs 416,000 in 1918-19.<sup>2</sup> Both in terms of schools and of pupils success was marked : the number of recognised maktab doubled in the five years to 1911-12, while unrecognised maktab increased only marginally, and from 28 per cent, the share of Muslim pupils in total primary enrolment in 1900, the share rose by 1915 to 43 per cent.<sup>3</sup> That growth continued until the late twenties when the world recession struck Bengal, as the following table shows :

	<u>Number of recognised Boys' Maktab</u>	<u>Pupils</u>
1911-1912	3,695	112,785
1916-1917	6,549	206,495
1921-1922	9,963	242,793
1926-1927	13,085	448,968
1931-1932	16,359	614,717
1936-1937	16,627	677,561

Sources : For 1911-1912, BQR 1907-08 to 1911-12, 150; BQR 1912-13 to 1916-1917, Supplementary Tables 26-27, p 74-75; For 1921-1937 BQR 1932-1937, 114.

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1. GB-Edn., 7M-2. A62-65. Sept 1921.

2. Ibid.

3. Momen Committee Report, 16.

Reform of the madrassas was a more lengthy process. The Calcutta Madrassa, in its Arabic department taught an orthodox, nine year course, with instruction in Urdu for the first five classes and thereafter in Persian. The subjects were Arabic and Persian, and Muslim law, logic, rhetoric, philosophy, Quaranic exegesis and hadith. Optional English classes were available but not popular. The other half of the Madrassa, the Anglo-Persian Department, taught a complete High School course to matriculation with English as a compulsory subject and Persian as an optional subject.<sup>1</sup> In other Madrassas a reformed syllabus was introduced with Islamic education given together with the secular, English, history, mathematics and geography being compulsory subjects.<sup>2</sup> This pattern was introduced in 1914, Muslim leaders expressing themselves quite confident that it would be well received. Moulana Abu Nasr Waheed, Principal of the Dacca Madrassa and a member of the Madrassa Reform Committee, for example, collected many favourable pronouncements from the orthodox ulema and Anjumans of Eastern Bengal and Assam. He commented tartly on the pressure, largely from West Bengal, to maintain the old orthodox course in the Arabic Department of the Calcutta Madrassa - "generally those who would not allow any relative or friend of theirs, not to speak of their own children to receive instruction (there)". Such people "anything but strictly orthodox, entertain from a safe distance a peculiar fondness for the Calcutta Madrassa with the orthodox course ... as a glorious piece of antiquity left by some ancestor to be jealously guarded against any improvement, or as a monument of a glorious past ...."<sup>3</sup> Nawab Khwaja Salimulla was quite

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1. IQR, 1897-98 to 1901-02, I375-6.

2. Sadler Report, IV, 177. In the High Madrassas under the reformed scheme (four years' course) logic, rhetoric and Muslim law were taught in Arabic from modern books, history, arithmetic and geometry were taught in English. The standard in Arabic was much higher than that at the matriculation course; the standard in English, arithmetic and geometry was also the same but the omission of algebra made the general standard in mathematics lower than that at the matriculation.

3. Waheed to GB, 28 Aug. 1913. GB-Gen-Edn., IM-6(1-30). A122-154, Feb 1915.

emphatic in his condemnation of the old-style madrassa, where "these illiterate masses are apt to be misguided and deluded by these half-educated Maulvis, and are made a tool in their hands to serve their own purpose. They are the people who in fact sow the seeds of dissension and hatred among the different communities ...." The East Bengal madrassas such as the Hammadia in Dacca did not teach Islam in its 'true sense', in the way that Deoband or Saharanpur did.<sup>1</sup> Shamsul Huda, a member of the Executive Council further condemned the older madrassas because after twelve or fourteen years study their products, book-learned but without any culture, emerged quite unfit for public service or the professions... "useless members of society and a burden on it. The only appointments open to them were poorly paid teacherships of Arabic and Persian in schools or Madrassas or the post of Muslim marriage registrar. The largest numbers of them lived by adopting the profession of a religious preacher which was only a form of dignified begging." Most of the students, he commented, were from the better class agriculturalists of Eastern Bengal, now fairly well off, but very orthodox and completely in the hands of the mullas.<sup>2</sup>

To ensure the success of the scheme a number of stipends were offered to better students who took the full 'secularised' course. And since the Reformed Madrassas would be teaching to all intents and purposes "a secular course for Muslim students", from 1915 Government accepted that the cost of government madrassas and of grants-in-aid to others would be a proper charge on provincial revenues. The words 'Reformed Scheme' thus salvaged the Government's declared policy of religious neutrality.<sup>3</sup>

The reformed madrassa course ended in the Special Islamic Matriculation examination, first held in 1919, which led on to Islamic Intermediate Colleges, or rather college classes attached to the High Madrassas at Dacca,

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1. Salimulla to Nawab Ali Choudhury, 20 Sept 1913. GB-Gen-Edn, IM-6(1-30). A122-154, Feb 1915.

2. Shamsul Huda, Note, 15 May 1913, GB-Gen-Edn. IU-6. A1-4, June 1913.

3. GB to GI, 28 Jan. 1915. GB-Gen-Edn <sup>8M</sup>/<sub>4</sub> A12-14, March 1915.

Chittagong and Serajganj in Pabna. The curriculum here included English, a vernacular, Arabic (two papers), Fiqh, Usul, Quran, and Hadith plus one paper from Kalam and Arabic Logic, Islamic history, mathematics, logic, economics, history or English literature.<sup>1</sup>

The natural culmination of the system should have been an Islamic university or a university Islamic Studies Department. The encouragement given by the Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam to Muslim education and the growth of Muslim student numbers pointed that way. But it was the undoing of the partition of Bengal, announced in December 1911, which led Hardinge to offer to Muslim representatives of Eastern Bengal, a University at Dacca as a means of safeguarding their now threatened educational progress.<sup>2</sup> Hardinge's promise would henceforth be regarded as a compensation for the loss of the province caused by the annulment of the partition of Bengal.<sup>3</sup>

Immediately the Hindus denounced the proposal for a separate university at Dacca as "an internal partition," and attacked the aim of promoting a specifically Muslim education.<sup>4</sup> Public criticism sharpened further when the Dacca University Committee in its Report suggested a full fledged Department of Islamic Studies, though the Committee argued that this was the natural outcome of earlier educational reforms, and neither an attempt to placate Muslims nor, emphatically, "an excuse for providing Muhammadans with government posts". Such a department, like the reformed madrassas, would produce Arabic scholars, but armed with a thorough knowledge of English.<sup>5</sup>

The criticism, even if disguised as solicitude for Calcutta University, showed scant regard for the Muslim's backwardness, need for education and claim to more adequate representation in university administration. As

1. Momen Committee Report.

2. An unofficial deputation in December was followed by a formal submission on 31 Jan 1912.

3. Nawab Ali Choudhury to GB, 14 Nov 1919. GB-Gen-Edn., IU-29.A122-146. Dec. 1919.

4. GB-Gen-Edn., 4A-38. A39-43. Sept. 1912.

5. Nathan and Archbold, Joint Note, 17 March 1912. GB-Gen-Edn., IU-6.A1-4. June 1913.

P.C. Lyon, the Member for Education in the Bengal Executive Council, commented, behind the "catchwords of libera " and protest against separation was bhadralok jealousy of the rise of competitors, in education and in administration.<sup>1</sup> Specific criticism of the Islamic Studies Department, too, was mainly Hindu, and in the case of the Calcutta Syndicate comment that the ancient and mediæval studies proposed were an unsuitable training for the modern world or the degree of a modern university, could be petty too.<sup>2</sup> The Syndicate's comment consorted oddly with the plea from Surendranath Banerjee, Sir Gooroodas Banerjee, ex-Vice-Chancellor, and the Committee of the Bengal Provincial Conference, that the Islamic Studies Department should be matched by a similar scheme for Sanskrit Studies.<sup>3</sup> The Sadler Commission appointed in 1917 to review Calcutta University was enthusiastic, however, about such a department at Dacca.<sup>4</sup>

Within the proposed University there was also to be a separate College for Muslim students. In 1909 the Government of India had suggested that a Muslim College on the lines of Aligarh was an ideal for Bengal to aim at.<sup>5</sup> Though the Bengal Government was unenthusiastic, the Government of India renewed the proposal in 1913, urging that separate Muslim institutions should be established where possible.<sup>6</sup> The Dacca University Committee too unanimously backed a separate Muslim college, and when the proposal was criticised by Hindus as divisive, Robert Nathan, the chairman, and W.J. Archbold, in a joint note commented : "These are matters which are primarily for the consideration of the Muhammadan community, who form a small minority in the general colleges, not for the Hindus who are in practical possession of them. It is well known that the small Muhammadan element in a large Hindu college do not mix fully in its general life and are not able to benefit to the same extent

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1. Lyon, Note, 9 May 1913. GB-Gen-Edn., 1U-6. A1-4, June 1913.

2. Nathan and Archbold, Note, Ibid.

3. Ibid.

4. Sadler Report, IV, 177-78.

5. Ibid., I, 169.

6. Ibid.

as others from the corporate organisation of the college." Having their own college would enable Muslim students to mix with Hindus on terms of equality and to participate more fully in university life.<sup>1</sup>

The argument for a Muslim college from the student point of view, as rescuing them from minority isolation, applied equally to Muslim staff. As Shamsul Huda observed "... for all practical purposes every college in Bengal is more or less a Hindu college"<sup>2</sup> The figures for Muslim college staff bears this out very strikingly

Colleges	Teachers of Oriental subjects		Teachers of other subjects		
	Hindus	Muslims	Europeans	Hindus	Muslims
II Government	39	15	28	213	17
9 Aided	20	8	0	120	8
8 Missionary	18	1	47	78	0
11 Unaided	33	4	4	231	4
Calcutta University	25	5	11	125	6
6 Medical, Engineering and Teacher Training	0	0	24	69	2
4 Law	0	0	2	76	0
	137	33	116	912	37

Source : Sadler Report, I, 164.

And the number of Muslims on college governing bodies was smaller still - only Mymensingh had as many as two, eight government and aided colleges had one, twenty-three had none at all.<sup>3</sup>

The demand for an exclusively Muslim college was in part satisfied, when Dacca University came into being in 1921, by the establishment of Muslim Hall as one of the three university halls of residence.<sup>4</sup> This provided a social and institutional setting for Muslim students just as the Islamic Studies Department provided a specifically Muslim intellectual setting. Then in 1922 Fazlul Ha que moved a resolution in the Bengal

1. Nathan and Archbold, Note, 17 March 1912. GB-Gen-Edn., IU-6. A1-4 June 1913.

2. Shamsul Huda, Note, 15 May 1913. Ibid.

3. Sadler Report, I, 164.

4. ISC, VIII, 51-52.

Legislativ Council demanding the establishment of a Muslim college in Calcutta,<sup>1</sup> but it was not until 1926 that Huq then Education Minister, established the Islamia College there.<sup>2</sup>

Thus by the end of 1926 the structure of special institutions for Muslims was complete, "having as its base, a network of thousands of maktabas bound up with hundreds of Junior and Senior Madrassas with three Islamic Intermediate Colleges forming a connecting link with its crown, the Islamic Department of the Dacca University."<sup>3</sup> In 1926-27 there were 20,723 maktabas with 628,446 pupils; 521 Junior Madrassas with 46,795 pupils; 17 Senior or High Madrassas with 4,206 pupils, and three Islamic Intermediate Colleges leading to the Islamic Department of Dacca University.<sup>4</sup>

The hope of Government, and of some of the leaders of Muslim society, was that the creation of this separate structure would break down prejudices and bring Muslims more widely into the educational system, while the reform of the curriculum at primary and secondary level would make the education offered more useful, in secular terms. That more Muslims did go to school is evident in the statistics :

Muslim students in general and special institutions (boys and girls)

	<u>Primary Schools</u>	<u>Maktabas</u>	<u>Secondary School</u>	<u>Madrassas</u>
1921-22	383,110	401,764	31,762	25,336
	366,409	628,446	36,616	50,999
	398,970	859,533	54,417	67,864
	475,294	986,632	72,538	72,764

Source : BQR, 1932-1937, Tables 79, 84, 85, pp.113-114.<sup>5</sup>

It is clear from these figures that there was growth in all sectors, but also that the growth was much faster in the special Muslim institutions,

1. GB-Edn., 11C-45. B207-212. Jan 1923.

2. ISC, VIII, 52-53.

3. Momen Committee Report, 82.

4. BQR, 1932-1937, 114.

5. In the original tables the figures for Primary Schools are 784,874; 994,855; 1,258,503; 1,461,926. These, however, include all maktabas recognised and unrecognised by the Department. The figures given here are arrived at by subtracting maktab pupil numbers from the primary school column. Since in 1921-22 only 25,000 pupils were in unrecognised maktabas, and in 1936-37 only 5,000 they can be disregarded.

very much so at the primary level. What they do not say is how far those special institutions had been assimilated into the Departmental system, as Government, District Board and Municipality-managed institutions, as aided, or as unaided but recognised maktabas. Here, too, however there had been a very marked shift - the number of unrecognised boys' maktabas, for example, dropping from 573 in 1926-27 to just 6 in 1936-37.<sup>1</sup> There had been a qualitative change as well as a quantitative one.

This separate system was very much a Muslim creation. Their leaders had pressed demands upon Government, but the community had also acted for itself: the cause of Islamic education was very close to the heart of every pious Muslim. Village and small town mosques served as regular collection centre for donations, mostly small in amount, while itinerant mullas and moulvis made door to door collections for charitable maktabas and madrassas. Many families of ordinary means would offer free board and lodgings to maktab and madrassa pupils in what was known as the jagir system.<sup>2</sup> In this way many private institutions, scattered across the Bengal countryside, eked out an often hand to mouth existence. In 1927, there were some 7,000 students in the kharijia unrecognised madrassas of the single district of Noakhali alone.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, as with pathshalas and Hindu managed aided secondary schools, a large share in the running costs of madrassas and maktabas was met out of fees. In 1912 of the total expenditure on madrassas of Rs 2,01,477, public funds contributed Rs 71,972, but fees provided Rs 74,832 and private subscriptions, and donations the other Rs 50,673.<sup>4</sup> In 1936-37 when total outlay had reached Rs 15,08,595 two-thirds of the sum was met from fees and other private sources.<sup>5</sup> In the case of maktabas Government contributed something over half both in 1921-22

1. BQR, 1922-23-1926-27, 109 and 1932-1937, 213.

2. Abdur Rahman, Jatatuku Mare Pare, 27.

3. Nurul Huq Choudhury, Notes on Moslem Education, 13.

4. BQR, 1912-13-1916-17, XVIII-XXI.

5. BQR, 1932-1937, 110.



and 1936-37, but the total cost had grown by more than 200 per cent, a major effort by private individuals.<sup>1</sup>

The line of advance represented by the reformed maktabas and madrassas was not without its critics however. J.A. Taylor, for example, the first Assistant Director for Muslim Education in Bengal, considered a separate system inadvisable, its benefits open to doubt though, given Muslim suspicion of general institutions, Government ought to maintain or aid some special institutions. Government's major help to the community would be in adding secular subjects to the maktabas - and this, indeed, was what made him see a Muslim Arts College in Calcutta as "the greatest educational boon."<sup>2</sup> J.N. Roy, however, the Education Secretary, felt that it would "tend to intensify and perpetuate the race distinctions and exclusiveness" of the Muslims.<sup>3</sup>

Separate institutions, like separate electorates were divisive even if perhaps necessary. But their attraction to conservative Muslims, that they incorporated basic Islamic elements, often made more difficult the other aim of ensuring greater competitiveness in employment and social action. The reformed madrassa scheme ran parallel to the general line, touching it at almost every point, equalling it in length, in each of its stages. From every class or stage Muslim students might pass to the corresponding point of the general line, though not vice-versa, in a way which had been quite impossible from the old-type madrassas. Or such at least was the theory.

For if the reformed scheme successfully broke down the resistance of many conservative Muslim families to English education, nevertheless it was inefficient compared to the ordinary High School system. Boys turned out from these madrassas were below average in their grasp and general knowledge.<sup>4</sup> The courses in the Junior and Senior madrassas and Islamic

1. BQR - 1921-22 to 1926-27, IV and BQR 1932-1937, 213.

2. Taylor to D.P.I., 12 Aug. 1922. GB-Edn., 11C-45. B207-212, Jan 1923.

3. J.N. Roy, Note, August 1922. Ibid.

4. Momen Committee Report, 154.

Intermediate colleges claimed to correspond to Middle and High English schools and the Intermediate college stage. But the standard of mathematics was lower, and English less thoroughly taught in the Muslim institutions because the curriculum was so loaded, in the case of the Islamic Intermediate course, heavily loaded, in favour of Islamic subjects. Several witnesses testified to this effect and suggested that the standard in Arabic might be lowered so as to make room for more mathematics for example. The Momen Committee, however, rejected the suggestion. In so doing it ran counter to its brief, which was to suggest improvements in Muslim education, by handicapping the Madrassa student and then expecting him "to run abreast of, if not outstrip, his fellow competitor in the race for academic honours".<sup>1</sup>

The same was true at the Intermediate level, where the Islamic Intermediate College Syllabus, the Group C course of Dacca : was said by the Momen Committee to correspond to the ordinary Group A course, but did not in reality do so. Both groups had two compulsory papers in English and the vernacular, but whereas in Group A the other four subjects, eight papers in all, were optional, in Group C a further six papers in Islamic subjects were also compulsory. A Group C student who did not take two optional papers in English literature would be very ill equipped, comparatively, in English.<sup>2</sup> The Committee quite reasonably pointed out that "the average run of boys who join these institutions come from backward areas and start with a handicap for want of proper home influence and educational environment".<sup>3</sup> What they did not admit was that the Group C course handicapped them further. One member of the Committee, Mahmud Hassan, Provost of the Muslim Hall, from much personal experience did recognise this, however, saying in a Note of Dissent, "the average Madrassa-passed student

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1. Mahmud Hassan, Note of Dissent, Momen Committee Report, 154.

2. Ibid. 156.

3. Ibid. 89.

finds it difficult to keep pace with other students in following the work of departments other than the Islamic Department."<sup>1</sup> The madrassas and Islamic Intermediate colleges must maintain their Islamic character and atmosphere, he argued, but their curriculum should approximate to those followed in general institutions if they were to retain their appeal and usefulness. Dr Shafaat Ahmad Khan, addressing the All Bengal Muslim Educational Conference at Chittagong in April 1930 made the same point, but more bluntly, when he proposed that all the special institutions be swept away as inefficient, virtual cul-de-sac for the majority of their students.<sup>2</sup>

One remedy, as Government saw it, was to push for improvement within the special system by closer Government supervision and support. Since 1889 there had been special inspecting officers charged with responsibility for maktabas and madrassas and with looking after Muslim interests in general institutions. Then in 1911 Hardinge, on the visit to Dacca during which he proposed a university, suggested the appointment of a special officer for education in Eastern Bengal.<sup>3</sup> Sharp pressed for a separate Directorate for Eastern Bengal, and persuaded Harcourt Butler of its value in maintaining momentum after the reunification of the Bengals.<sup>4</sup> An outcry followed in the Calcutta press, however and a deputation, headed by Rash Behary Ghosh denounced a separate Directorate as likely "to widen the division" and to "perpetuate the evils of partition".<sup>5</sup> When Wilson, the Finance Member, raised objections to the cost of two educational charges, Hardinge wavered. Robert Nathan, Education Secretary, Bengal demonstrated how separate the two Bengals educationally were - Muslim boys formed 20

1. Momen Committee Report, 156.

2. Prabashi Chaitra 1337 (March-April 1930), 992-93.

3. GB-Gen-Edn., 4A-38. A39-43, Sept 1912.

4. Sharp had noted that between 1906 and 1910 government educational expenditure in Eastern Bengal had doubled to Rs 24,00,000 - even then less per head than in Bengal. Now there was "grave apprehension lest the district round Calcutta again begin to swallow up assignments and the Eastern Divisions stand still or retrocede". Sharp, Note, 2 Jan 1912. GI-Edn., A64. May 1912.

5. GB-Edn., 4A-38. A39-43, Sept 1912.

per cent of primary pupils in West Bengal, 65 per cent in East Bengal, and 11 per cent of secondary pupils as against 41 per cent,<sup>1</sup> but P.C.Lyon of the Bengal Executive Council objected to anything which intensified division: " while doing all we can to improve madrassas, we should encourage by all means in our power the admission of Muhammandan boys into the ordinary high schools of the province in which they will work side by side with Hindus and will profit by competition with them. I think it would be a most unfortunate result of our policy if we were to foster the idea that the State encourages two systems of secondary education, one, represented by the High schools, being Hindu and the other, represented by the madrassas, being Muhammadan ."<sup>2</sup> In the end an Assistant Director for Muslim Education was appointed, but for Bengal, as a whole, not the eastern divisions only. The post was given greater weight, however, by the appointment of a European I.E.S. man, J.A. Taylor. He had the powers of an Inspector in respect of madrassas and maktabas and could correspond directly about them with the Director, and though he had no authority over the European Principal of the Calcutta Madrassa, he was a member of its governing body. He also had wide discretion in the allotment of grants-in-aid and other funds for Muslim institutions. He visited all general institutions to study the conditions under which Muslim pupils lived and worked and to advise on change and improvement that might seem desirable.<sup>3</sup>

Reformed syllabuses, greater financial support, closer supervision, more hostels and halls of residence - what could be done to secure efficiency and usefulness in the separate Muslim educational system was

1. Nathan, Note, 22 May 1912. GB-Edn. 4A-38. A39-43, Sept 1912.

2. Lyon, Note 24 May 1912. GB-Edn., 4A-38. A39-43, Sept 1912. George Anderson, Assistant Secretary, Govt. of India also attacked separate institutions "... because Muhammadans are supposed to be backward, they are to be taught separately as duffers and not to be given the privilege of being taught alongside more intelligent boys". Anderson, Note, 15 March 1917. GI-Edn., A2324, May 1917.

3. GI-Edn., A65-69, Nov. 1912.

done. But there were many who felt that the system was not a valid answer to the problems of the Muslim child and his community. Because of the inefficiency of the special institutions they could not produce Muslims with the high educational qualifications needed to break the Hindu monopoly of public appointments, and public life, in Bengal. (Even had they been more efficient, the overloading, especially on the language side, in the Senior Madrassas imposed a daunting handicap, as witness after witness made clear to the Sadler Commission.) Shamsul Huda, trenchant as usual, commented "The madrassas are the outward expression and an outcome of the orthodoxy that refuses to move with the times and clings to an archaic system of learning which whatever reward it may bring in the next world, brings none in this."<sup>1</sup>

The alternative, as Lyon had said, was to induce more Muslims to use the general educational system. This had always been desirable, given Government's wish to balance recruitment to its services between the various communities.<sup>2</sup> The constitutional changes introduced in 1919, and the troubled politics of the Non-Co-operation and Swarajist era, made the issue more urgent. As the Fifth Quinquennial Review, Bengal, of 1912-1917

1. Shamsul Huda, Note, May 1912 GB-Gen-Edn., 4A-38. A39-43, Sept 1912.

2. Till 1905 a proportion of appointments to the provincial and subordinate civil services, on the executive side, had been by competition. In that year this was abandoned. Risley, the Home Member argued the case particularly from Bengal. "There the Bengali Hindu, with his great industry, and phenomenal memory, would sweep the board and no Muhammadan, Behari, Uriya or Domiciled European would ordinarily stand a chance." The pronouncement would stop the constant clamour in the press for an extension of open competition: it would encourage University education by making higher degrees a passport to government service; it would leave the Government free to deal equitably with the claims of different races, religions and localities and it would enable the Government to retain the legitimate influence that attached to government patronage. Risley, Note, 4 May 1903. GI-Edn., A47, Nov 1903 and Risley, Note, 25 April 1904, GI-Home-Edn., A67-76, May 1904. The problem was that until Muslims secured university degrees, they could not use them as the passports to Government service envisaged by Risley.

put it: "Muslims represent more than half the total population of Bengal, and until they are educated sufficiently to be able to take an interest in the affairs of public life, it is difficult to conceive of Bengal as a part of a self-governing dominion within the British Empire. Indeed, it seems that the only possible way in which these people can be made to realise their privileges and responsibilities as subjects of the British Empire is by giving them every facility for English education."<sup>1</sup>

From 1912 therefore Government provided a series of advantages to Muslims : twenty-five per cent of all vacancies in government and aided colleges were reserved to them, and a percentage in all government schools, and in each class, which would take account not only of Muslim members in the school, but in the locality which it served. Government also undertook to maintain the High Madrassas at Dacca, Chittagong, Hooghly and Rajshahi, releasing Mohsin Trust money for Muslim scholarships and stipends tenable in arts and professional colleges. Government sought to secure a Muslim element on school staffs beyond the usual Arabic and Persian teachers - annual reports to the D.P.I. being required to check progress. (A similar procedure was applied to school office staff.) On Fridays work in Government institutions was interrupted for jumma prayers. More Muslim hostel places were also provided, in the non-collegiate Taylor hostel in Calcutta and in the Baker hostel attached to the Calcutta Madrassa. In the quinquennium 1912-17 Rs 84,000 a year was spent from Imperial grants on reformed madrassas, and in providing stipends for Muslim students at the Sibpur Engineering College where Carmichael had been surprised in 1914 to find not one Muslim student present. Other stipends were provided at the Calcutta Medical College.<sup>2</sup>

Of these measures the reservation of places in schools was the most

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1. BQR, 1911-12 to 1916-17, 133.

2. GB-Gen-Edn., <sup>4-C</sup>/<sub>31</sub> 1-2. Al-4, April 1915. Most of these measures followed upon a Committee chaired by Hornell, the DPI, appointed by Bengal in 1913 on Government of India advice to review Muslim problems and complaints. Some Muslim requests were turned down - e.g. that for religious instruction in government schools, which was refused as contrary to Government's policy of religious neutrality. On the other hand the proportion of places in schools reserved for Muslims was revised upwards in many districts in 1918.

far reaching. The Hornell Committee pointed out, however, that the scheme left unaided schools untouched. The Department of Public Instruction had some control over government and local bodies managed institutions, but the real authority over aided, and the only authority over unaided schools was exercised by the University. The Committee thus stated "even unaided schools recognised by the University are public institutions and as such the University should insist on their being made acceptable to all classes and communities of His Majesty's subjects in Bengal."<sup>1</sup>

Rules reserving twenty-five per cent of college places were also made - but six refused to accept them. Four - Scottish Churches, Calcutta, Wesleyan at Bankura, Braja Mohan at Barisal and Narail at Jessore were against any reservation, while two, Daulatpur Hindu Academy and Ananda Mohan College, offered ten and twenty per cent only. To meet their objections the Director proposed that vacancies not filled by a fixed date would be open to all, and that Muslims in the second division at Matriculation would not have preference over first-division non-Muslims, though they would over second division non-Muslims. These proposals were accepted and built into the grants-in-aid rules.<sup>2</sup> There are no statistics by which to assess the effect of these rules. At the premier, but expensive Presidency College, even though they paid only Rs 2 to 1917 and thereafter Rs 5 instead of the full Rs 16 fee, Muslims never filled the quota of places reserved to them. They took up less than a quarter of the Intermediate places reserved but only a handful in the BA and BSc classes, in 1916, and in 1922-23 though filling the Intermediate quota, still lagged markedly at undergraduate level.<sup>3</sup> In the latter year forty-four Muslim applicants were

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1. Sadler Report, I, 153. Whether the University so acted it has not been possible to discover. In view of its refusal to act on the parallel issue of Muslim representation on school governing bodies, it seems unlikely that it did so. See below.

2. GB-Gen-Edn.,  $\frac{4-C}{54}$  1-2. A84-85, Dec 1917.

3. GB-Gen-Edn.,  $\frac{4-C}{23}$  A22-37, July 1927.

refused by the college - the authorities were clearly not prepared to lower standards very far. The same held in the technical and professional colleges, in which reservation was not applied and admissions were strictly on merit. In 1914 of 811 students at medical college 11 were Muslims and of 320 engineering students, just 7 were Muslim. At Technical School level there were no Muslims among the 307 students at Sibpur and in the other eight technical schools in Bengal the number was 96 in a total of 495.<sup>1</sup> The problem of the Muslim student who in maktab and madrassa received a rather inferior mathematical training was well illustrated at the Sibpur Government Engineering College. In the period 1920 to 1925 only 33 Muslims secured admission, of whom ten were non-Bengalis. Of the Bengalis who were accepted ten joined the civil engineering, eight the mining and five the mechanical and electrical class. Only one completed the civil engineering course, one secured the mining pass diploma and none had finished the mechanical and electrical course by 1925.<sup>2</sup> This appalling wastage occurred despite the stiffness of the competition for admission and despite care to award only so many of the Muslim scholarships at Sibpur as there seemed qualified candidates.<sup>3</sup>

In the Legislative and Executive Councils demands continued to be made for more technical scholarships for Muslims. But Fazlul Haque was constrained to admit that at the Ahsanulla Engineering School at Dacca, for example, many Muslims had to be turned away as unsuitable and too few qualified candidates appeared to permit the award of all the existing scholarships.<sup>4</sup> Oaten, the D.P.I. had to reply in similar terms to the appeal for two more scholarships raised by Sir Abdur Rahim, Member in charge of education.<sup>5</sup> And when Fazlul Haque raised the question of

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1. GB-Edn.,  $\frac{7-M}{2}$  3 A7-24, Sept 1916.

2. GB-Edn., 11S-1 of 1926. A23-26, Jan 1927.

3. Ibid.

4. BLCP, 26 Aug 1924, 8-9.

5. GB-Edn., 11S-1 of 1926. A23-26, Jan 1927.



reservation of places in technical institutions,<sup>1</sup> their teaching staff had opposed them - pointing out how damaging psychologically it could be : J.H. Richardson, Principal at Sibpur, wrote to Oaten "the claims that are put forward for concession in standard (which cannot be granted) tend to make students of these classes (Muslim and Anglo-Indian) think that they are inferior intellectually to the Hindu students and that it is not fair to expect them to try to do what these latter can do".<sup>2</sup>

However it is not the case that Muslims shunned all professional and technical institutions or that they registered no advances. In the twenties and thirties Muslims did enter those vocational institutions which held out prospects of employment - Teachers Training Colleges and Normal Schools provided one secure avenue, but the following tables show that there was growth, though variable, in many fields. This was aided by a Government of Bengal circular of 1914 requiring that no qualified Muslim candidate should be passed over, even in the presence of a better qualified non-Muslim, until one third of all government posts were held by Muslims.<sup>3</sup> (In 1925 a second resolution made one third the minimum, with fifty per cent the ratio to be aimed at.)<sup>4</sup>

	Muslim male students				As a percentage of all male students			
	1913-14	1921-22	1926-27	1937	1913-14	1921-22	1926-27	1937
Arts Colleges	1,155	2,175	3,414	4,405	7.8	12.8	14.3	15.4
Training Schools	876	1,200	1,100	1,380	41.6	47.7	48.2	47.0

Source : Momen Committee Report, 22, 26-27 and BQR, 1932-37, 113,200.

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1. BLCP, 26 Aug 1924.

2. GB-Edn., 11S-1 of 1926. A23-26, Jan 1927.

3. GB-Appointment, 4M-4 (1-2) A30-31, Sept 1917.

4. GB-Appointment, 4M-4, 12. A70-71½, Nov 1925.

Colleges	Muslim male students			As a percentage of all male students		
	1913-14	1926-27	1937	1913-14	1926-27	1937
Law	131	615	294	6.4	16.9	15.4
Medicine	11	143	77	1.3	8.9	5.3
Engineering	7	29	41	2.1	9.9	14.4
Commerce	-	10	83	-	2.1	5.9
Veterinary	-	40	58	-	32.0	31.5

Sources : Momen Committee Report, 26; BQR 1912-13-1916-17, 112-115 and<sup>1</sup>  
BQR, 1932-37, 201. Report on Public Instruction in Bengal, 1913-14, Supplement, 18.

The one field in which reservations and quotas was not, in practice, allowed to operate was education. When in 1919 a question about this was raised by B.C. Mahtab it was shown that Principal James of Presidency had defied the 1914 circular, and that P.C. Lyon had supported him in this by issuing a confidential letter to the D.P.I. in 1916 laying down that in high teaching appointments academic qualifications must prevail. Mahtab and Ronaldshay, looking in 1916 at appointments found them "more than startling" - as Ronaldshay said, Lyon's letter had been "an unwarrantable repudiation" of the 1914 circular. Even under this pressure however Hornell refused to agree that a Muslim must be appointed if qualified, "though markedly inferior to a Hindu, but that ceteris paribus, you must take a Muslim".<sup>2</sup> The quality of teaching was to be preserved, though for administrative posts in the Education Services the one-third rule should be applied.

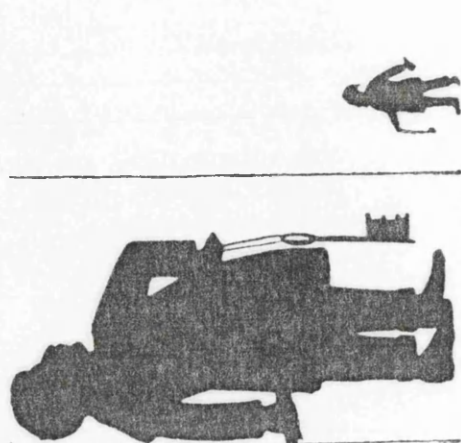
When the issue was brought up again in 1925, first at the All-India and then at the Bengal level, the outcome was another circular or Order-in-Council to all departments to enlarge reservations. But even Sir Abdur Rahim

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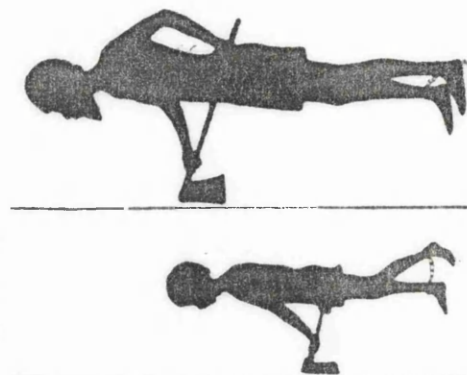
1. In 1935 the Momen Committee recommended that competitive admission tests for the professional colleges should be dropped, and that Muslim candidates "with the minimum prescribed qualifications" should be admitted to a certain prescribed proportion of the places available. The results of the tests would not be allowed to override the percentage condition while Muslims appeared with the minimum academic qualifications. Momen Committee Report, 66.

2. Hornell, Note, 28 Oct 1919. GB-Edn., 7E-1. A33. May 1920. Shamsul Huda agreed that University qualifications "must remain the supreme test". Ibid.

# Banking and Money-lending

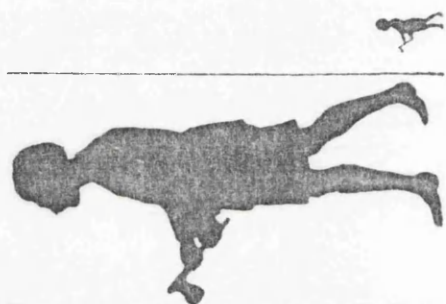


N-M. 131,057  
M. 23,054  
Ratio 6 : 1

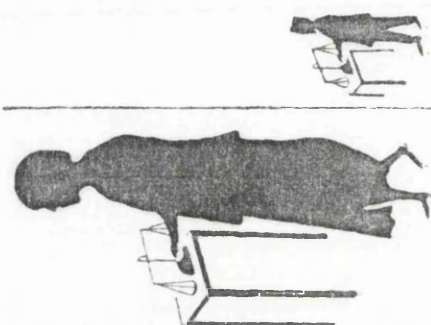


Jail Population  
N-M. 5,807  
M. 8,082  
Ratio 3 : 1

# Engineering Colleges & Survey Schools

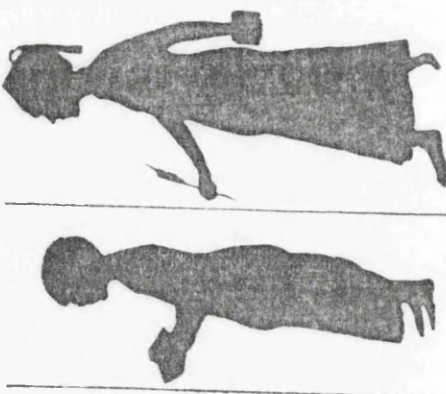


N-M. 712  
M. 101  
Ratio 7 : 1

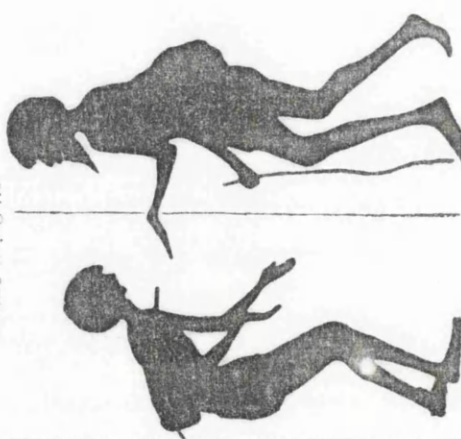


Trade and Commerce  
N-M. 18,45,677  
M. 594,182  
Ratio 31 : 1

# Primary Schools

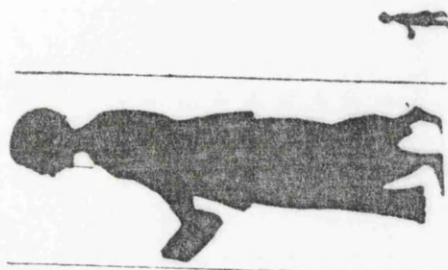


N-M. 803,320  
M. 829,970  
Ratio 8 : 8 1/2



Beggars  
N-M. 187,195  
M. 208,196  
Ratio 100 : 111

## Colleges



N-M. 18,951  
M. 2,992  
Ratio 23 : 4



N-M. 88,375  
M. 26,751  
Ratio 13 : 4



## Government Service

## Law



N-M. 51,317  
M. 5,902  
Ratio 9 : 1

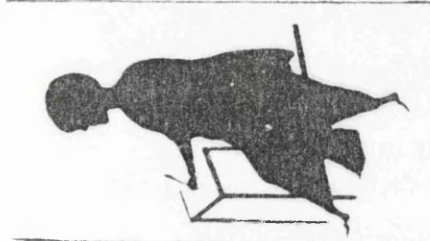


N-M. 1,091  
M. 127  
Ratio 8 : 1



## Post-graduate Classes

## Commercial Schools and Colleges



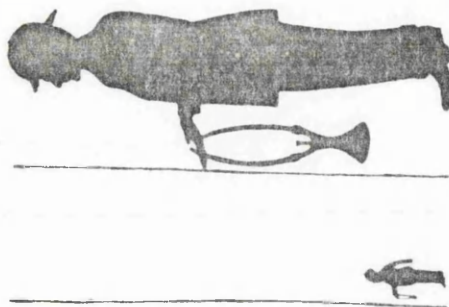
N-M. 2,180  
M. 167  
Ratio 13 : 1



N-M. 606  
M. 21  
Ratio 29 : 1

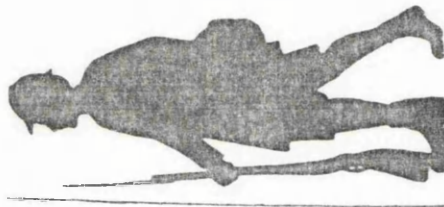
## Art Schools

Medicine



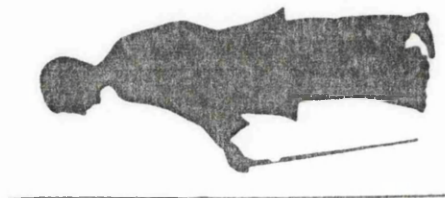
N-M. 126,978  
M. 25,760  
Ratio 5 : 1

Military Service



N-M. 59,631  
M. 483  
Ratio 12 : 1

Literacy (male)



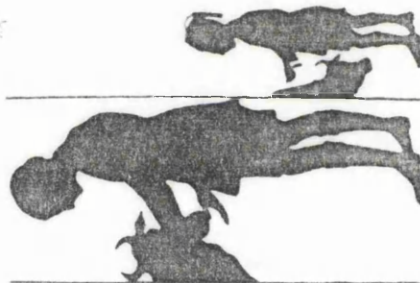
N-M. 2,710,645  
M. 1,041,169  
Ratio 9 : 4

Technical Schools



N-M. 4,414  
M. 928  
Ratio 19 : 4

Veterinary School



N-M. 92  
M. 52  
Ratio 9 : 5

High Schools



N-M. 84,519  
M. 15,794  
Ratio 28 : 5

Literacy in English  
(men)



N-M. 605,990  
M. 127,907  
Ratio 5 : 1

Municipal and District  
Board Service



N-M. 19,560  
M. 4,709  
Ratio 25 : 6

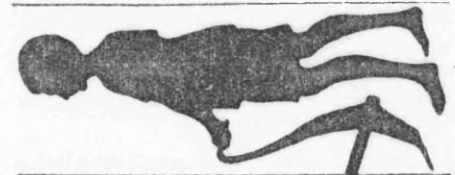
Middle Schools



N-M. 89,632  
M. 19,857  
Ratio 4 : 1



Literacy  
in English  
(women)  
N-M. 41,878  
M. 3,161  
Ratio 13 : 1



Agricultural  
Schools  
N-M. 124  
M. 19  
Ratio 13 : 2



Medical College  
N-M. 2,948  
M. 605  
Ratio 5 : 1



Training Schools  
and Colleges  
N-M. 2,285  
M. 1,168  
Ratio 2 : 1





a thorough-going communalist, admitted the need, for men of the highest specialised qualifications on the teaching side, though he argued that on the administrative side, particularly among the inspectorate, there could be a much stricter attention to the need for adequate Muslim representation. "It was partly because the personnel of the educational establishments was so wholly devoid of understanding of, and sympathy with, the cultural requirements of the community", Rahim said, "that the Muslims of Bengal so long refused to take advantage of western education."<sup>1</sup> The results of this double attitude to teaching and administration, in the education field is apparent from the table below, which describes the position reached by 1934 :

	<u>Total appointments</u>	<u>Muslim held</u>	<u>Muslim percentage</u>
Principalships of institutions other than communal	12	0	0
College Professorships, excluding Arabic and Persian	109	4	3.6
Headmasterships of High and Normal Schools (non-communal)	42	8	19
Divisional and Second Inspectorships	12	8	66.6
All offices, excluding the DPI's	333	121	36.3
D.P.I's office	70	22	32.3

Source : Momen Committee Report, 128 and 130.

At the school and college level another source of grievance for Muslims was the almost complete dominance exercised by the high caste Hindus over the management of non-government institutions. Because of their active involvement in the creation of the school system in villages and towns, their investment in education, <sup>Hindus</sup> were almost exclusively represented on managing committees and governing bodies. Here also

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1. A. Rahim, Note 27 July 1925. GB-Appointment, 4M-12. A70-71 $\frac{1}{2}$ , Nov 1925.

Government moved to redress the balance. Before 1918 it had used the Grants-in-aid Rules to require that members of managing committees of aided schools "shall be so selected as to represent all classes of the community"<sup>1</sup> After 1918 it extended its grip by laying down that management committees of aided schools should be elected by the teachers and school benefactors and the parents or guardians of the pupils and then adding a clause that the constitution of the committees and the election of their presidents and chairmen required the approval of the District Magistrate.<sup>2</sup> In the revised Rules of 1930 it was further required that the names of all elected members of the committees must be submitted to the Magistrate "whose duty it will be to ascertain before giving approval that minorities have been properly represented"<sup>3</sup> It was argued, moreover, that the same revised code in effect transferred the distribution of grants-in-aid "from the control of the Education Department to that of the General Administration Department," so that in practice "the distribution of grants-in-aid has become a matter for the District Magistrate's patronage"<sup>4</sup>

The Calcutta University School Code, which applied to all schools, aided and unaided, made no mention of the District Magistrate, and required only that there should be a member nominated by the Education Department on the committees of all aided High Schools. When the Code was revised in 1930 all mention of the District Magistrate continued to be excluded.<sup>5</sup> The University and the Hindu public alike opposed the back door introduction of the District Magistrate into the administration of a transferred subject, when neither the Act of 1919 nor the Devolution Rules gave him any authority in the matter.<sup>6</sup> As the MLC Harendranath Raichoudhury complained, "for

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1. Momen Committee Report, 57.

2. Ibid., 57. The revised rules were approved on 25 Feb 1918.

3. Ibid., This was GO 4249, Education of 17 Nov 1930.

4. Harendranath Raichoudhury, 62.

5. Momen Committee Report, 57.

6. Harendranath Raichoudhury, 58.



partial aid there must be full control ... control again, not of the Education Department alone, but of executive officers into the bargain "<sup>1</sup> Here, in pernicious form, was that limiting Government control against which Hindus had had to fight since Curzon's day.

The Momen Committee also expressed dissatisfaction - but for contrary reasons. They disliked the election of the school committees because in seventy per cent of the schools Muslim voters were in the minority. What they wanted was either election of Muslim representatives by Muslims only or reservation of seats communally. Both these ideas were turned down by the University.<sup>2</sup> They also complained that though under departmental pressure aided schools put one or two Muslims on their management committees, and in unaided schools, too, perhaps a solitary Muslim, such Muslims were there "merely by sufferance of the majority" and had little effective voice. The Momen Committee again pressed therefore for Muslim representation to be imposed by Government, by legislative measure if necessary.<sup>3</sup>

What is striking is the contrast between the Hindu and Muslim attitudes to government intervention in education. Muslim reliance upon Government, a tacit alliance, had taken clear shape during the partition and swadeshi agitation years. Muslims, as the educationally and economically backward community in order to hold their own against the dominant Hindu, sought British co-operation and support, offering in return their loyalty to the Raj. From the British side it became part of their policy to raise an educated Muslim middle class to counter Hindu militancy. This was spelled out in the Bengal Government's Resolution No 1227 of 3 August 1916: " ... many of the present administration difficulties in Bengal are due to the educational inequality between the two communities. Comparatively few Muhammadans are engaged in professional pursuits. They are largely outnumbered by the Hindus in industry and commerce. The deficiency of Muhammadans

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1. Harendranath Raichoudhury, 67.

2. Momen Committee Report, 58.

3. Ibid.

qualified for appointment to administrative posts is a not infrequent source of embarrassment to Government." "The development of the country, in political as well as in other directions, is dependent on the uniform educational progress of the two main constituents of the population." Muhammadans, the Resolution concluded, "... should receive such special facilities as may be necessary to enable them to benefit as fully as the Hindus from the educational institutions which are maintained, wholly or partially, out of public funds."<sup>1</sup>

The Bengal Government was not even content with that : since unaided institutions still played a large part in Bengal, Government were anxious that they too should be enlisted in the task. It was partly in order to bring them under some sort of state control that in 1914 Government proposed the Board for Secondary Education, which would advise on the distribution of grants and other policy matters. Here, however, Muslim mistrust of an elected body supervened. As Nawab Ali Choudhury pointed out "From the experience of the University of Calcutta Muhammadans will be afraid that the advantages... they now enjoy ... will all be set aside by the Board should it unfortunately be created."<sup>2</sup> What they wanted was Government control of the distribution of grants and educational policy - and they unitedly voted against the scheme.

Calcutta University, as Nawab Ali Choudhury pointed out, was something of a bogey to Muslims. The internal management of the University was vested in the Senate, which was also powerfully represented on the subordinate University bodies. The Senate was a large body, and eighty per cent of its members were nominated by the Chancellor. Yet, as at so many other levels of education, the Muslims found themselves very ill represented in the Senate and other university organs. The backwardness of the Muslims in education, in industry, commerce and the professions meant that they were a minority in

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1. Quoted in Sadler Report, I, 156.

2. See Sadler Report, I, 154.

the Senate, while the narrow range of teaching posts which Muslims, as the less well educated community, could enter kept them off most boards of study, the faculties, and so on.

So long as the University was a purely examining body conducting its examinations with a reasonable degree of impartiality, and so long as Muslim numbers in higher education were low, under-representation on university bodies was relatively unimportant. But by the beginning of our period, with the University changing its role and exercising wide powers of superintendence of colleges and high schools, in which Muslim enrolment was growing, the whole question assumed a different complexion. As the University under Asutosh's long tenure became an ever more effective stronghold of the Bengali Hindus, Muslim complaints against it grew louder. Every Muslim witness before the Sadler Commission agreed in stating that the situation in the University was unfavourable to their community. They felt that the Chancellor had not exercised his very large rights of nomination to the Senate fairly. They complained about the inadequate provision for instruction in Arabic and Persian, lack of hostel accommodation at Calcutta colleges, the difficulty experienced by Muslim students in obtaining admission into colleges, the encouragement by the University of a Sanskritized Bengali, which was difficult for Muslims to acquire and the use of text-books which were either uncongenial to Muslims, being steeped in Hindu religion or tradition, or even positively objectionable to them.<sup>1</sup>

By the time the Sadler Commission met in 1917 the Muslims' suspicion and distrust of the University was strong enough for them to ask for a change in the procedure whereby candidates wrote their names on examination answer books. Although the Commission found no conclusive evidence of anti-Muslim discrimination, the Muslim press frequently published stories of such bias.<sup>2</sup>

1. See Sadler Report, I, 175.

2. Sadler Report, I, 175. See also Sadler Report, II, chs. XVIII and V, 12-13, where the Commission recommended anonymity, at least at Matriculation level.

Given the growing antagonism between the communities individual examiners may possibly have been influenced - especially in the matriculation examinations where very large numbers of examiners were involved - 895 of them in 1917, of whom only 9 in papers other than Urdu, Persian and Arabic were Muslim.<sup>1</sup> Whatever the truth, this remained a sensitive issue for Muslims while the University stubbornly refused to change the rule.

However the key issue was Muslim under-representation in the Senate and other university bodies. One fifth of the Senate was elected by the registered graduates of the University, who, being in an overwhelming majority Hindu always elected Hindus. The Chancellor could and did try to help but there were limitations on his power. So the Muslims demanded and the Sadler Commission recommended statutory reservation of seats in the future reorganisation of the University. Only Sir Ali Imam of the thirty-eight Muslim witnesses opposed communal representation,<sup>2</sup> while the eighteen British witnesses were evenly divided (Of the opponents, most favoured communal colleges, even the establishment of communal universities.)<sup>3</sup>

W.C. Wordsworth, Officiating D.P.I. Bengal made a more particular point, observing "of recent years the University's interpretation of the needs of the public it serves has been mainly inspired by one dominant personality with much resultant unrest. A more catholic government would give wider satisfaction and disarm much hostility. A more catholic constitution of the Senate might be accompanied by the reservation to Government of the right of nominating two members of the Syndicate; this could be used to nominate, e.g. a Muhammadan, when, as is usual, neither the Faculties nor the Senate elect one."<sup>4</sup>

The Sadler Commission expressed its thoroughgoing dislike of communal representation in the University, but, in view of the strength of the Muslim

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1. Sadler Report, I, 176.

2. Ibid., 184-85. Sir Ali Imam was a nationalist Muslim and a member of the Indian National Congress.

3. Ibid., 184. Henry Sharp suggested local universities at Dacca and Chittagong to serve Muslim interests.

4. Sadler Report., I, 184. This was still the case in 1935 when the Momen Committee reported : "Since the creation of the University not a single Muslim gentleman has been successful in being elected ... though some of the candidates were graduates of approved merit and ability." Report, 68.

sense of grievance, felt compelled to allow it at certain points "at which the consideration of Muslim convictions and needs is pertinent and appropriate."<sup>1</sup> They were careful to point out, however, that in the re-organised University "the influence of the Muslim representatives will depend mainly on their quality and on their ability to discharge their responsible duties with regularity of attendance and with adequate knowledge of the conditions of university life. We hope, therefore, that the Muslim community will furnish an increasing number of teachers of first-rate capacity for participation in university work."<sup>2</sup>

With that awkward bow to the ideals of efficiency and excellence, the Commission then turned to the creation of safeguards for Muslims all along the line. They stipulated that Muslim graduates should be included among the Registered Graduates entitled to elect members of the Senate; Muslims should be given representation in the Court - three at least of the seventeen seats on the Executive Council; four in the Academic Council; four on the Board of Mufassal Colleges; three each on the Board of Women's Education and the Board of Students' Welfare. Further they urged the establishment of a Muslim Advisory Board "to advise the University on matters affecting the interests and convictions of Muslim students."<sup>3</sup> Muslim needs might be met, they suggested, partly by establishing Muslim colleges, halls of residence and hostels in which the atmosphere would be more congenial; partly by making in colleges with a considerable group of Muslim students separate provision for the tutorial and social needs of the Muslims; partly through a reconstruction of the University which would establish chairs in branches of Islamic studies in the Faculty of Arts and would welcome Muslim scholars from the whole Islamic world.<sup>4</sup> But while the Commission accepted communal representation in educational administration they were quite unwilling to make the concession in respect of "appointment to the principal teaching posts" of the

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1. Sadler Report, V, 217.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid, 214.

4. Ibid., I, 187.

University where they thought it would be fatal to depart from the principles of merit irrespective of race or religion.<sup>1</sup>

The Sadler Commission ended with a pious hope that the new movement of Muslims into higher education would be "the presage of an intellectual unity which would lessen, if it might not obliterate, the breaches caused by ancient divisions and by deep differences in cultural tradition. A greater equality in point of culture might strengthen the forces which make for harmony and co-operation between the two main sections of the Bengal population."<sup>2</sup> What it did, in reality, presage was a fierce inter-communal struggle for jobs, in a shrinking market. And economic competition was reinforced by the political competition, the new assertive awareness of a separate Muslim identity, ushered in by the reforms of 1919.

Those reforms enlarged the Muslim electorate from a little over 6,000 to 4,65,000, many of them peasants, and in general terms carried the franchise to many whose education must have stopped even before the Middle English school or Junior Madrassa level.<sup>3</sup> They produced, too, a more representative Legislative Council in which Education as a transferred subject was a votable item in charge of a Minister removable under pressure from Council members. But they also ensured that the Council was divided, by its constitution, into groups responsible to separate communal and sectional electorates. The members owed no common allegiance to a single body.<sup>4</sup> In such a divided legislature the Muslims, with thirty per cent of the seats, were a large enough element to make their support very important, and with the Europeans' fourteen per cent sufficient, with official and other minority elements, for ministry building.<sup>5</sup> C.R. Das for a brief period valiantly, but in the end

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1. Sadler Report, I, 187.

2. Ibid., V, 214.

3. Broomfield, 54 and 128, gives the voting figures as 6346 and 465,127. The number of Muslim males aged twenty and over literate in English was rather less 150,000 at the 1921 Census, and for those literate in any language rather over 1,800,000.

4. See Abul Mansur Ahmad for an account of the way in which he, as a Congress supporter, was alienated by the communalism which increasingly infected Congress politics at this time.

5. For the composition of the Bengal Legislative Council and its electorates see Table 4, Broomfield, 128.

unsuccessfully sought to bridge the communal gap, but at his early death in 1925 a new upsurge of communal hostility followed, and the violence which became a permanent feature of Bengal politics. At the third general election under Dyarchy in 1926 polarisation along communal lines became discernible, although ministerial instability and changing personalities confused this. More significantly from this date Hindu middle class dominance of the Council came to an end.<sup>1</sup> From 1926 onwards the ministries were as a rule in the hands of Muslim politicians leading a mixed group of Muslims, low-caste Hindus, Europeans, Anglo-Indians and a few pro-British Hindu members. For the first three years no ministry enjoyed steady support because of Muslim factionalism. But once the solid Swarajist bloc had been called out, early in 1930, by the AICC, Muslim factionalism was no longer a serious threat to the community's control of the Council. And whichever Muslim ministry might be in power certain common objectives would be perused in the interest of the community, agrarian reform being one, the extension of education another.

Their social engineering, designed to shift the social and economic balance in the Muslims' favour, received ready support from the British, both officials and non-officials, whose position in India was threatened by Hindu policies of boycott, civil disobedience and terrorism, and who in Bengal saw in the Muslim peasant a natural counterpoise to bhadralok zamindar.<sup>2</sup>

The educational demands of the Muslims were set out in association and party manifestos, of varying degrees of fullness but notable similarity of aim. Thus the Central National Muhammadan Association of Calcutta in 1926 appealed to Muslim electors to support Muslim candidates who would work for communal representation on all self-governing institutions, the universities

1. They failed thus to prevent the passage of the Bengal Tenancy Act Amendment Bill, 1925, the Municipal Bill 1925 and the Dacca University Act Amendment Bill, 1925 though they opposed them all.

2. Report on the working of the Reformed Constitution, 1927, 186. The only line of genuine political advance involved "a greater equality of influence of the two classes which are broadly represented by landlords and tenants".

included, and for a due allotment of educational funds for Muslims.<sup>1</sup> The Bengal Muslim Party merely elaborated that demand, specifying free and compulsory primary education, with provision for training in agriculture and cottage industries; efficient technical and vocational institutions in all large centres; a Board of Secondary Studies, the reform of Calcutta University and creation of a Muslim University; proper Muslim representation on all educational bodies, facilities for Muslim students in proportion to the Muslim population and a due share in employment as the measures to be worked for.<sup>2</sup>

It was easier to formulate aims, however, than to achieve them. A more representative Calcutta University was a cherished Muslim goal, but even with Sadler's elaborate recommendations in support, the advance was frustratingly slow. Since legislation had failed, the Bengal Government, which from 1926 had always had a Muslim in charge of education, tried nomination. Though impressive on paper the power to nominate yielded modest fruit: in a Senate of 104, Muslim members between 1912 and 1934 rose only from six to twenty.<sup>3</sup> An effective Muslim presence on the Syndicate was a harder task to which Oaten, the DPI, set himself, declaring how struck he had been "with the anomaly that in Bengal, college and school education was controlled by a body of 17 men in which there was not a single Muhammadan".<sup>4</sup> (His task was made easier when Jadunath Sarkar became Vice-Chancellor, since he was a committed anti-Asutosh faction man.) With official backing a few Muslims also secured election to other bodies: two Muslim Divisional School Inspectors and an Assistant DPI ousted two Hindus of long standing on the Board of Studies in Teaching.<sup>5</sup> The greatest triumph of all, of course, was the appointment of the physician Hassan Suhrawardy as Vice-Chancellor

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1. Appeal of A.K. Ghaznavi, Association President. The Moslem Chronicle, 10 Sept 1926.

2. Ibid.

3. Calcutta University Calendars of 1912 and 1934.

4. BLCF, 23 March 1927, 409-10. While Oaten was thanked by a Muslim MLC for managing "to get in more Muhammadans through the official door", Hindus objected to the "official Muslim" presence. Ibid. 422. Speech by Moulvi Muhammad Sadeque.

5. BLCF, 22 March 1928, 410.



from 1930 to 1934.

But within the University Muslims remained a minority, unable to translate their political power outside into any sort of control within it. In 1931 the composition of the Calcutta University bodies was as follows :

<u>Institution</u>	<u>Total membership</u>	<u>Muslim members</u>
Senate	104 + 10 <u>ex-officio</u>	13
Syndicate	16	0
Faculty of Arts	64	13
Faculty of Law	34	7
Faculty of Engineering	Not available	0
Faculty of Science	Not available	0
Faculty of Medicine	Not available	0
Post-graduate Council - Arts	156	9
Post-graduate Council - Science	77	0
Undergraduate Committee	Not available	7

Source : BLCP, 26 March 1931, 562.

On the Boards of Higher Studies for English, Sanskrit, Pali, Philosophy, Politics, Commerce and Pure Mathematics there was not one Muslim, and none on the Committees for Free Studentship, Research and Scholarship Award, Library, Bill and Provident Fund. Among the paper setters at Intermediate level there was one solitary Muslim (in Bengali), and at Matriculation level eight Muslims to the one hundred and seventy-one Hindu examiners in the three main papers English, Bengali and Mathematics. These figures were given for a year when the Vice-Chancellor was a Muslim - but then as the speaker said, "can we expect any relief from him who is surrounded by a section of unsympathetic councillors?"<sup>1</sup> Or as Ali Karim, chemical engineer and Fellow of Calcutta University commented : "The interests of Moslem students are not properly attended to, as the Moslem members find themselves in a hopeless minority;

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1. BLCP, 26 March 1931, 562-565. Speech Bazlul Haq.

they cannot take any active part in furthering the cause of Moslem education" - and this "even under the management of a Moslem Vice-Chancellor...."<sup>1</sup>

Nor was it for lack of well qualified individuals that Moslems were under-represented: an IES officer recommended for the Registrarship<sup>2</sup> or a man like Qudrat -e-Khuda, IES, Premchand Roychand scholar, D.Sc., Paris, Professor at Presidency College, candidate for the Faculty of Science were passed over for communal reasons.<sup>3</sup> And as Azizul Haque, later Education Minister, declared, "It is not a question of the distribution of the loaves and fishes. It is a question of the aspiration of the intelligent and able men of our community, who feel that they have a right to take part in the administration of the Calcutta University."<sup>4</sup>

That the Vice-Chancellor was not in a position to provide any 'relief' is obvious from the next table which gives details of the communal composition of Calcutta University teaching and administrative staff :

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1. Momen Committee Report, 69.

2. BLCF, 26 March 1931, 561. Speech, Azizul Haque.

3. BLCF, 24 March 1932, 595-596. Speech, Tamizuddin Khan.

4. BLCF, 26 March 1931, 561.

<u>Subjects</u>	<u>Hindu and Muslim professors</u>		<u>Hindu and Muslim monthly salaries</u>	
English	16	0	Rs 3,400	Rs 0000
Sanskrit & Pali	28	0	4,375	0
Arabic & Persian	0	8	0	1,295
Vernacular	16	2	1,160	200
Philosophy	12	1	2,260	390
History	14	1	2,980	0
Ancient Indian History & Culture	14	0	3,025	0
Economics	18	0	3,850	0
Mathematics	9	0	3,120	0
Post-Graduate Department	242	3	Rs40, 058	Rs 30
Registrar	1	0	900	0
Assistant Registrar	1	0	450	0
Audit Officer	1	0	500	0
Office Superin- tendent	1	0	325	0
Clerks	58	0	9,319	0
University Press	29	0	2,861	0
Grand Total	460	15	Rs 78,853	Rs1,915

Source : Abul Khair 'Yavanabarjita Vidyapith' (A Muslim-less University),  
Muhammadi, Jaistha 1343, (May-June 1936), 553-556.

The Hindus, however, were less and less ready to loosen their grip on the University as they lost ground elsewhere to the Muslims. Between 1920-21 and 1934-35 they saw Muslim membership of District Boards, handling Rs 140,00,000 a year by 1929-30 rise from 31.8 to 41.8% and eleven of the twenty-seven Boards pass under Muslim control.<sup>1</sup> They saw a steady growth in Muslim representation in the Calcutta Corporation, and the Bengal Council under Muslim ministries from 1926 onwards. They were the more determined to hold on to the University which they had done so much to foster. Syamaprasad Mookerjee spoke for them in declaring that Muslims were not under represented and not justified in their dissatisfaction : "We are entitled to ask - what is the proportion of students belonging to that community reading in the University, what is the number of Muhammadans appearing at the different University examinations ? The fact is that nearly 80 per cent of students reading in schools and colleges in Bengal are Hindus and only 12 per cent are Moslems. More than 30,000 Hindus appear at the University examinations and the number of Moslems is not even 4,500." Between 1929 and 1934, of the Rs 16,00,000 received as donations Moslems had contributed Rs 600. Not, he shrewdly added, that the University therefore disregarded legitimate Muslim interests : "press for your rights, but your rights must be broadbased on quality, on fitness, and not simply on your population and numerical strength in the province."<sup>2</sup>

But for all Syamaprasad's claim, there was evidence of cultural communalism and disregard of Muslim interests. The rapid expansion of the post-graduate departments was accompanied by much University publication of learned articles and the award of research and travel grants. But as Nural Huq Choudhury pointed out, the amounts spent on research dealing with

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1. J. Gallagher, 'Congress in decline : Bengal, 1930-39', Locality, Province and Nation, 281-285.

2. BLCP, 21 March 1934, 403-04. Syamaprasad was son of Asutosh Mookerjee and had entered the Senate in 1920 and was Vice-Chancellor 1934-38. In the late thirties he joined the Hindu Mahasabha and in the forties was its All-India President.

The scholar and linguist Dineshchandra Sen made a similar point in a letter: "Calcutta University was mainly a creation of the Hindus; they contributed the bulk of its funds during its early days; most of its scholarships, medals and prizes were endowed by the Hindus ...." The Mohammadi, Asadh 1343 (June-July 1936), 639-641.

Hinduism and with Islam were grossly disproportionate, and he presented a rough balance sheet of expenditure on staff, research grants, scholarships and publications connected with the two fields of culture and history : on the former Rs 2,75,000, on the latter Rs 15,000. And when the output of a year of publications was examined the same violent bias showed - indeed, in 1923 of the twenty-one papers published covering the period from pre-historic India to that of the Marathas not a single work had a Muslim theme.<sup>1</sup>

The text-books prescribed by the University for secondary schools and colleges, especially the vernacular readers and history text books, were also consciously or unconsciously Hindu, stressing Hindu cultural values, denigrating Muslim achievements and rule - and written, this being an added injury, in "a sort of Sanskritised Bengali, permeated with Sanskritic words, saturated with Sanskritic ideas." "Such Bengali," Muslims complained "is far from being the vernacular of the Presidency, not to speak of the Muhammadans, in East Bengal particularly."<sup>2</sup>

It might be argued that Bengali Hindus - like the ordinary Hindus of Uttar Pradesh today - were victims no less than the Muslims, of the Sanskrit pandits. This was certainly the view of Ramananda Chatterjee, editor of Prabashi and the Modern Review testifying to the Sadler Commission. He

1. Nurul Huq Choudhury, Notes on Moslem Education, 17-19. Attacking Government's readiness to leave the University and higher education in bhadralok hands, Choudhury went on : " ... the educated class represents a distinct community whose outlook is entirely different from our own and frankly hostile to our interests. On no other hypothesis is it possible to explain the fact that while the most junior and inexperienced lawyers among the Hindus are allowed to hold responsible positions in the University, Moslems with far more experience and ability are seldom nominated and never elected."

2. Shamsul Ulama Nasr Waheed, Evidence, Sadler Report, X, 500.

objected to the many University-approved textbooks "written in an artificial, stilted and ornate Sanskritic style. Mussalmans object, and rightly object, to the prescription of such books. I also consider them objectionable from the point of view of style and diction for Hindu students, Bengali is not, as Hindu Pundits would have us believe, Sanskrit with only the case-endings vernacularised. It has an independent existence. Non-Bengali members of the Commission may have some idea of the kind of Bengali style generally favoured by the University if I say that it is Bengali Johnsonese run mad."<sup>1</sup> What could not be denied, however, was that Muslim sentiments were most insensitively assaulted by the choice of topics and selections made by the University. Thus the 1935 Bengali Selections included Jatiya Shahitya (National Literature) by Sir Asutosh<sup>who</sup> listed that literature's sources : "Veda, Upanishad, Ramayana, Mahabharata, these are our ideal books; Sita, Savitri, Arundhati, Lopamudra are our ideals of womanhood, Rama, Yudhishthira Dadhichi, Bhishma, Arjuna are our heroes .... If you can brighten up the hearts of the Bengalis with the beautiful image of your Mother Literature you will transform your two-armed Banga-Bharati into the ten-armed Goddess Durga."<sup>2</sup> As a Muslim commented for 'Bengalis' Asutosh should have written "Bengali Hindus!"<sup>3</sup> The Matriculation Bengali Reader of that same year had pieces by Iswarchandra Vidyasagar, Bankimchandra Chatterjee, Rabindranath Tagore and other Hindus, but no Muslims, and titles like Shakuntala, The Temple, Triumph of Valmiki, The Test of Sita, Motherland, Siddhartha Bimbisar and Gods on Earth, while the Intermediate Selection had 41 prose pieces all by Hindus, and 58 poems, 55 by Hindus. The topics again were Hindu and puranic in flavour.<sup>4</sup>

Year after year Muslims protested : "Bengali literature is now so rich that you can find innumerable beautiful pieces which may be subscribed to wholeheartedly by men to whatever race or religion they may belong ... the

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1. Ramanada Chatterjee, Evidence, Sadler Report, X, 518.

2. Asutosh Mookerjee, Jatiya Shahitya.

3. 'Nuri', Article. The Mohammadi, Jaistha 1343 (May-June 1936), 568.

4. 'Khaled', Article : The Mohammadi, Jaistha 1343 (May-June, 1936), 521.

selections do reveal a positive bias ", ill becoming to a University "meant to minister to the needs of the Moslems as well as the Hindus."<sup>1</sup> This appeal to secular values was promptly denounced in Dainik Basumati as a Muslim conspiracy to make Hindu boys forget their culture.<sup>2</sup> It was Muslim culture which was at risk, however, for with the ban on the visual and performing arts in Islam, oral and literary culture was particularly important. Abdur Rahman in his autobiography makes the point : "The neighbouring prosperous Hindu villages had their system of entertainments at religious festivals. At night, after escaping the vigilance of our elders, we could attend these easily enough. The verbal duels of the poets, the eternal conflict between the gods and demons, the heroes and heroines of the two epics, these all had a tremendous attraction for us and left a lasting impression on young minds." He goes on "The school text-books of those days were also full of these stories. As a result the Muslim pupils were as familiar with Hindu mythology, religion and social customs as the Hindu pupils themselves."<sup>3</sup>

Hindus replied that this result was natural, since by origin the Bengali Muslim masses were Hindus or Buddhists<sup>4</sup>. A most lively newspaper debate developed from the claim that the Muslims, if separate in religion, were Bengalis as a nation (jati)<sup>5</sup> Rabindranath Tagore added his powerful voice, holding Bengali Muslims to be "really Hindu-Muslims". "Nation is a much larger concept than mere dogma and much closer to the heart, too. A change of dogma does not mean change of nationality." "The Hindu is the culmination of national synthesis of the totality of Indian history."<sup>6</sup> To which the rising poet Abdul Qadir replied" ... the caste system,

1. BLCP., 24 March 1936, 400-401. Speech by Abul Quasem.

2. Dainik Basumati, 29 March 1936. BNNR, April 1936.

3. Abdur Rahman , 5. Born 1907 in Chittagong, was in the first batch of Dacca University students, later joined the Bengal Education Service.

4. Dineshchandra Sen, letter, The Mohammadi, Asadh 1343 (June-July 1936) 639-641.

5. Ananda Bazar Patrika, 16-17 and 24 Jaistha 1343 (May-June 1936).

6. Rabindranath Tagore, 'Atma Parichaya' (Self Identity), Mohammadi , Sravana 1343, (July-Aug 1936) 665-667.

untouchability, idolatry and love of speculative philosophy - these are the characteristic features of the 'national synthesis' of the Indian nation. If Hinduism accepts, for its own healthy development, the civilised principles of equality, welfare, better social relations and universal truth - as advocated by Islam - that in time will lead to the evolution of a new concept of Indian nationhood ...."<sup>1</sup>

Much turned, of course, upon an initial lack of text-books written by Muslims. Bengali's spectacular progress in the nineteenth century was a high caste Hindu achievement which did not touch the Muslims. Their upper strata cultivated Persian and spoke Urdu, their impoverished masses read a Puthi literature written in 'Mussalmani Bengali.' Not till the end of the century did Bengali Muslims emerge from their literary isolation and write on impeccably Muslim themes - in the Sanskritised Bengali of Hindu literateurs. But the process of identification with Bengali went on so steadily that by the 1920's they were ready to back Calcutta University's move to introduce Bengali as the medium for school examinations up to Matriculation level.<sup>2</sup> It was not until about this point that the problem of 'Muslim' text-books could be solved.

The problem had still been serious enough in 1912 for the Dacca University Committee to appoint a six man Vernacular Sub-Committee, three Hindus and three Muslims, under the chairmanship of the Principal of the Calcutta Sanskrit College. They proposed Government or Dacca University encouragement to authors to publish Bengali books "of a Muhammadan character".<sup>3</sup> The phrase excited hostile comment, was seen, indeed, as self contradictory: "a Bengali cannot write from a Muhammadan standpoint and his ideal will

1. The Mohammadi, Sravana 1343 (July-Aug 1936), 665-667.

2. Fazlul Haque was an exception in arguing that Muslims in Bengal might speak Bengali but did not read it. (See BLCP, 22 March 1922) Haque was not defending the cause of Urdu, however, as a tiny minority mainly in Calcutta, Murshidabad and Dacca did, as the true mother tongue of Bengali Muslims. See Forward, 8 Jan. 1929; the Englishman, 8 Jan 1929 and Hartog Collection, MSS Eur. E.221/52.

3. GB-Gen-Edn., IU-6. A1-4, June 1913.



always be more a Hindu than a Muhammadan one;"<sup>1</sup> "the Bengali language is essentially Hindu in spirit"<sup>2</sup>; "this language has evolved in a manner which makes it impossible to isolate it from the Hindu pantheon, Hindu tradition, culture and ideology. The Muslims should learn ... that the Vedas and Upanishads were the creations of the golden age of their ancestors."<sup>3</sup> Both Government and the Committee accepted the principal objection, however, that it was not a proper function to pay authors to publish books of a particular (denominational) character.<sup>4</sup>

The rapid increase in the number of maktabas adopting departmental standards, which included teaching of the vernacular, by creating a large market induced many Muslims to write specifically for them. This specialist field was formally acknowledged by the Department of Education's practice of issuing two separate lists of approved text-books, one for schools, the other for maktabas, from which local bodies in charge of primary education should choose. There were also separate lists for books for Muslim and Hindu pupils of classes IV and V for home reading and occasional use. It was noticeable in any case that primary text-books by such well known writers as Vidyasagar and Madanmoban Tarklankar did not have the strong Hindu bias noted in university text-books, though Muslim authors writing for general institutions in our period tended to be more secular still in their choice. Those who wrote for the maktabas, however, showed plenty of what Muslims called "Islamic spirit". Apart from short essays on domestic animals, familiar plants and articles of universal use they filled the pages with lives of the prophets, Muslim saints, kings and heroes, and usually opened with a passage in praise

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1. GB-Gen-Edn.,<sup>\*</sup> Comment of British Indian Association. \*IU-6. A1-4, June 1913.
  2. Ibid. Comment of the People's Association of Dacca.
  3. Parimal Goswami, 'Bengali Literature and the Muslim community. Ananda Bazar Patrika, Jaistha 16-17, 1342 (May-June 1936).
  4. GB-Gen-Edn., IU-6. A1-4, June 1913.

of God.<sup>1</sup> Even so the primary text-books, as a whole, were much more balanced than those for secondary and collegiate levels.

Muslim complaints about the treatment of Indian history were matched by others about Bengali language readers. Abul Quasem in the Legislative Council moved a cut motion criticising Calcutta University for "the disregard of Muslim feelings and sentiments shown by the University in the preparation of text-books," and contrasted K.P. Mitra's treatment of India in the seventh to twelfth centuries as "a land of plenty, the kings as benevolent despots," while in the next five Muslim centuries it became "a land of corruption, intrigue, despotism and religious intolerance".<sup>2</sup> The writ of the Department did not run beyond the eighth High School class, however, so that it could do nothing about works approved and prescribed by the University. It did however direct the Text-book Committee to omit detailed references in school text-books to Tughluq atrocities, Jahangir's execution of Sikh Gurus or Aurangzeb's destruction of Hindu temples on the grounds, Khawja Nazimuddin, the Education Minister explained, that text-books must be accurate but need not dwell on detail likely to rouse racial, class or religious animosity in impressionable minds.

There was some Hindu protest against such 'sedition laws',<sup>4</sup> but a real storm greeted the proposal of the Director of Public Instruction when he suggested to the University that Islamic History be made an optional Matriculation and Intermediate subject and that provision be made in all High Schools for the teaching of Islamic History and of the elementary principles and practices of Islam. The Hindu press reacted sharply. "The dual alliance between British and Muslim interests in Bengal", wrote the

1. See, for example, Moulvi Muhammad Chand Baksh, Moslem Nitikatha, in accordance with the new curriculum of 1921 for the IV and V classes; Abul Hussain, Muslim Shantya Shiksha, for class II of maktabas, junior primary schools or junior madrassas. The revised curriculum applied to all schools with more than 30 per cent Muslim enrolment, so that the market was very large. Calcutta Gazette I, 19 Oct 1921, 1746.

2. BLCP 24 March 1936. K.P. Mitra's Indian History was approved and listed by the University.

3. BLCP 24 March 1936.

4. Prabashi, Poush 1340 (Dec-Jan, 1933-34), 446. "The existing sedition laws forbid creation of disrespect and antagonism to British rule. Under the new dispensation it is going to be an offence to write anything of that nature against Muslim rule even if a hundred per cent true."

Modern Review, "is always a force to be reckoned with. When to this was added the happy coincidence of one Muhammadan at the head of the Ministry Education and another at the helm of the Calcutta University, prophets of evil, we believe ... croaked away merrily about the communal onslaught that was soon going to be made on the schools and colleges of the province." To teach the practices of Islam would be to throw away the tradition of religious neutrality and "would land us in a quagmire of religious controversy." Here was "the last step in the long educational process by which the Islamisation of the rural population of Bengal is to be completed. If carried out it will complete the alienation of the Bengali Muhammadans from their native soil and their native traditions."<sup>1</sup> Very much the same objections were raised also by the Amrita Bazar Patrika.<sup>2</sup>

But alienation was, of course, precisely what the Muslims sought in all the controversy about text-books, language and courses. What they wanted was to establish the separateness of their identity, to prevent submergence in a bhadrakalok-dominated Hindu culture. "Undoubtedly the Hindus have been trying for long to turn the Muslims into Hindus," warned the poet Syed Emdad Ali, "The Bengali Muslim students of Calcutta University have become 99 per cent Hindus in dress, behaviour pattern and attitude ...."<sup>3</sup> This was the cause round which the author, politician and editor of the weekly Mohammadi, Moulana Akram Khan, gathered his band of enthusiastic poets and writers devoted to making Bengali a fitter vehicle for Muslim thought and culture. A Congress nationalist turned Muslim separatist, Akram Khan from the mid-twenties campaigned particularly against Calcutta University, which together

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1. Modern Review, February 1931.

2. Amrita Bazar Patrika, 26 Feb 1931, BNNR, March 1931. The Muslim vernacular Saogat, 2 March 1931, pointed out how good an opportunity this would be for Hindus to learn something of Islam. Muslims at school learnt all about the Ramayana and Mahabharata, but Hindus knew nothing about Islamic culture.

3. The Mohammadi, Bhadra 1343 (August-Sept 1936), 782.

with Muslim apathy and shortsightedness, he saw as mainly responsible for the de-Muslimisation of the Bengali Muslims. (English he ruled out - Muslims in the UP and Hindus in Bengal had flourished unharmed by their acceptance of English education.) Muslim apathy had allowed the Hindus to fashion Bengali, the language of the Muslim masses, into the medium of their culture instead. Bengali literature through a process of shuddhi had been converted into Hindu literature.<sup>1</sup> All through the primary and secondary schools Muslim pupils had been forced "to swallow this poisonous pill through the medium of the mother-tongue." The system of maktab teaching, with revised syllabuses, had been evolved to save Muslim culture and traditions at that level - but the evil influence of Calcutta University had still to be eradicated.<sup>2</sup> Such Muslim dissatisfaction with Calcutta University was one of the reasons for proposing a University of Dacca.

For most Hindus the proposals for Dacca University were objectionable: they smacked of Government control over education; they must mean a loss of jurisdiction and funds to Calcutta University; and they were overtly communal, since Muslims had demanded, and Sadler and the Bengal Government had agreed to special Muslim representation in the academic and administrative bodies of the new university. The Calcutta University Senate Committee set up to examine the draft Bill for a Dacca University expressed opposition to communal representation: the most they would agree to was some such arrangement as a purely temporary measure to lapse, unless renewed, at the end of ten years,<sup>3</sup> for, as one of its members, Lalit Mohan Chatterjee,

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1. M.A. Khan, 'Calcutta University and the Muslims of Bengal'. The Mohammadi Jaistha, 1343 (May-June 1936), 505-507. Akram Khan in describing the transformation of Bengali as a process of shuddhi (purification) is using both the literary term used to describe the elimination from Bengali of Urdu and Persian influence and the political term for the reception on purification into the Hindu fold of Hindus who had been converted to Islam.

2. Ibid.

3. The strong sub-committee included the then Vice-Chancellor and an ex-Vice-Chancellor, three European college principals and two Muslims. Interestingly one of these last, Abdulla Suhrawardy, Lecturer in Arabic, Calcutta University, in a note of dissent argued that communal interests should not predominate in higher academic appointments, though they might at lower and administrative levels. He also advocated mixed electorates for some Muslim seats.

GB-Gen-Edn., IU-1, A75-84, April 1920.

Principal of Jagannath College in Dacca argued, if the educational backwardness of the Muslims was reason for granting them special representation, it could scarcely justify giving them "a preponderating voice in the University "<sup>1</sup>

Nares Chandra Sengupta, lawyer, novelist, Vice-Principal of the Dacca Law College, put Hindu objections clearly and well. He began by commenting on the 'note of distrust' of the Hindus that ran right through the Sadler Report, and the unsoundness of the many special provisions for Muslims which they had in consequence proposed. Such provisions must produce an equally sinister agitation among the Hindus who, anxious to protect their supposed interests, would approach issues with a strong sectarian bias : already Calcutta University had demanded a Hindu Advisory Board to match the Muslim one proposed by Sadler for Dacca. Educational interests would by both parties be sacrificed to sectarian ones. It was also a mistake to associate Dacca "pre-eminently with Muslim interests ", for, he pointed out, "the University will for a long time to come have to serve the interests of the Hindu community much more largely than those of the Muslim community. For whatever the proportion of Muslims to Hindus at Dacca or in Eastern Bengal, among the intellectual classes who will for some time to come predominantly feed the University, the proportion of Hindus is overwhelmingly large." It was more damaging, therefore, for Government to entrench Muslims : "I have no objection to Muhammadans swamping the Dacca University by the open door, but I strongly protest against this .... It will furnish to the agitators a platform from which they will bring forward all sorts of considerations into university matters which by all means ought to be kept in the background."<sup>2</sup>

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1. Chatterjee to GB, 9 Nov 1919. GB-Gen-Edn., I-U 29. A122-146 Dec 1919.

2. GB-Gen-Edn., IU-1. A75-84. April 1920. Sengupta became first head of the Dacca Law Department and Provost of the Hindu halls of residence at Dacca. Nawab Ali Choudhury, on the other hand, wished to have the provisions for Muslim representation embodied in the Act itself since Muslim representation was "the fundamental principle underlying the foundation of the Dacca University ". GB-Gen-Edn., I-U 29. A122-146 Dec 1919.

The Dacca University Act of 1920 created a large representative University Court, a much smaller Executive Council, and for academic matters an Academic Council. In the Court there was a considerable ex-officio representation, much of it European together with seventy non-official members. Of these thirty were to be elected by the Registered Graduates, half of them to be Muslims returned by Muslim graduates. The other forty were to be appointed by the Chancellor who was to ensure that in the Court as a whole of the non-Europeans fifty per cent should be Muslim. In the seventeen member Executive Council the non-official Muslims were returned by separate electorates and an overall balance was struck as in the Court.<sup>1</sup>

In the first Court (1921-1924) 59 of the 171 members were Muslims but since only 4 of the 26 professors and readers were Muslims, and only 7 of the ex-officio members were so, the bulk of the Muslims in the Court, 40 members in all, were nominees of the Chancellor. (There was a formidable array of 31 Khan Bahadurs and Khan Sahebs among the 40 nominees). Of the Executive Council, 7 were Muslim, while the Academic Council had 7 Muslims among its total of 26 members. The contrast with Calcutta was striking.<sup>2</sup>

The Act secured to Muslims their representation on university bodies, and the Muslim Hall and a generous system of scholarships and stipends provided for Muslim students. What could not at once be achieved was a balance in the teaching staff. Here the community's weakness at the highest educational levels was an insuperable barrier. When the University opened in 1921 there were 8 Muslims, 6 from the Arabic and Persian Department, in a total staff of 60.<sup>3</sup> Twenty-five years later, in 1935-36, there were

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1. Dacca University Act, 1920. See Hartog Collection, Eur. E221/118.

2. Dacca University Calendar, 1921-22 to 1923-24, Ibid., Eur. E221/62.

3. Dacca University Annual Report, 1921. The two Muslim teachers outside the Islamic Department were the Oxford graduate A.F. Rahman, Reader in History at Aligarh and then at Dacca, who became first Muslim Vice-Chancellor in 1934. The other was Muhammad Shadidulla, Lecturer in Sanskrit - he had appeared as a private candidate for his Calcutta M.A. because the Sanskrit pundits of the University refused to teach a Muslim.

24 Muslims in a teaching staff of 124 - a larger but not much larger proportion than in 1921. More important, perhaps, Muslim growth in numbers had been largely confined to traditional areas : 14 taught Arabic, Persian or Urdu, 4 taught Education and Law. By contrast, of the 45 teachers dealing with Physics, Chemistry, Biochemistry, Mathematics and Economics just one was a Muslim! The ratio among students was equally unbalanced, Hindus outnumbering Muslims by nearly five to one in 1921 and by nearly three and a half to one in 1937, when numbers had risen to 1,754 overall, 1,359 <sup>Hindus</sup> and 395 Muslims.<sup>2</sup> The number of Muslim students passing through with first or second degrees was not large - fifty three in 1922, one hundred and sixty four in 1932, two hundred and ten in 1938,<sup>3</sup> but numbers alone are no guide to the role of Dacca University in promoting the nascent Bengali Muslim identity. In this the role of the Muslim Hall was particularly important. All Muslim students were either residents of the Hall or attached to it, and under its first Provost A.F. Rahman the goals set by the Sadler Commission of creating a corporate life coloured by a Muslim atmosphere were fully realised. He was a man of broad views and infectious enthusiasm, anxious with his two House Tutors Fakhruddin Ahmad and Muhammad Shahidulla to build up a distinctive tradition.<sup>4</sup>

One aspect, for which Shahidulla was responsible, was the religious and moral development of the residents: prayers were compulsory, on Fridays teachers from the Islamic Studies Department and other speakers led discussions on Islamic religion and culture, and on Sunday afternoons there were Qur'an classes.<sup>5</sup> The usual dress was cap, the close-fitting achkan coat, and North

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1. Dacca University Annual Report, 1935-36. Maulana Akram Khan, editor of the Mohammadi, commented "Although the Hindus have branded Dacca University as 'Mecca University' it would be more appropriate to call it 'Dhakeswari Vidyapith'. For although the 'No entry for Muslims' sign is not being observed here as rigidly as in the 'Kashi (Benaras) Vidyapith at Calcutta - that private zamindary of the Hindus - things are not very much better here." The Modhammadi, Magh 1343 (Jan-Feb 1937), 283-284.

2. Dacca University Annual Reports, 1921 and 1937-38.

3. Dacca University Annual Reports.

4. Rahman identified himself wholeheartedly with the Hall, declaring, at one of the annual dinners 'Like Louis XIV I feel that I am the Muslim Hall.'  
Dacca University Annual Report, 1922-23, 4 and 23.

5. Ibid.

Indian trousers, in themselves a cultural statement.<sup>1</sup>

The Hall had its own student union which organised all the social and cultural activities of the Hall, including the weekly debate, indoor and outdoor games, and the annual dinners which became one of the important social occasions of Dacca city.<sup>2</sup> From 1927 a Muslim Hall Magazine was published and from 1930 dramatic performances came to be staged, though initially this was frowned on by the orthodox.<sup>3</sup>

The number of students at Muslim Hall rose steadily, from the 75 residents and 103 attached of 1921-22 to the 242 residents and 176 attached of 1929-30 - and did so despite the fact that the Hall had no permanent building of its own. In 1931, however, the present Salimulla Muslim Hall was opened with accommodation for 300 students and well designed assembly and prayer halls, common and reading rooms, dining hall, tutorial rooms and quarters for the Provost and House Tutors.<sup>4</sup> The Hall provided a congenial atmosphere, very different from that in Calcutta with its sense of alienation and inferiority, an accessible teaching staff and sympathetic administration.<sup>5</sup>

1. Syed Mostafa Ali, Atma Katha (Autobiography), 92 and Abul Fazl. Rekha-chitra (Sketches), 134.

2. Dacca University Annual Report, 1922-23, 23.

3. Mostafa Ali records that when some Muslim Hall students, mostly English Department, proposed to put on a play, 'Banga-Nari' (Bengali Women) by the leading playwright D.L. Roy, students from the Islamic Studies side secured a fatwa from Moulana Abu Nasr Wahid, Principal of Dacca Madrasa, and two other moulanas of the Department declaring any performance of female roles would be anti-Islamic. The Provost, Rahman, had to yield to orthodoxy. But the theatre-lovers put on the play during the holidays and were secretly entertained to dinner at his residence by the Provost. Atma Katha, 122-125.

4. See Dacca University Annual Reports and the Golden Jubilee Volume of the Hall published in 1980. Typically the Hindu press virtually ignored the foundation of Salimullah Hall - Dacca Prakash which did mention it, 23 Aug 1929, dismissing it in one line. The threat of Swadeshi students to disrupt Convocation took the headlines, together with the 'Great Hindu Conference' at Dacca to discuss means of protecting Hindu women from Muslim anti-social elements.

5. The sense of inferiority at Calcutta was due in part to the comparative poverty of Muslim students - Bengali Muslims at Aligarh were also made to feel a social and cultural inferiority: "Aligarh was the educational centre of boys from aristocratic Muslim families all over India. Consequently a glamorous high<sup>life</sup> and aristocratic pretension became part of the Aligarh environment." Abul Fazl, 118.



No less important, Muslim Hall - and the University as a whole - was very well provided with scholarships and stipends for Muslim students, both undergraduate and post graduate. (There were some forty scholarships by 1924, a number of stipends from the Nawab Nawab Ali Trust Fund, and Muslim Hall had its own stipend fund, financed by the University, too.) Dacca provided by far the largest concentration of special awards and grants for Muslims in Bengal, or for that matter anywhere in India.<sup>1</sup>

Such provision, made on communal lines, roused an unrelenting jealousy and hostility among Hindu publicists to that "nursing ground" of communal spirit,<sup>2</sup> that "pampered infant on the Buriganga".<sup>3</sup> The same hostility received more damaging expression in the Bengal Legislative Council, too, where attempts to reduce the annual grant to Dacca University became a regular feature of the Budget debate. The Hindu supporters of Calcutta University denounced the "discriminating expenditure" in favour of Dacca.<sup>4</sup> The allocation in 1921-1922 of Rs 9,00,000 to Dacca University - its first grant - but of only Rs 1,40,000 to Calcutta drew a particularly angry outburst, and members aligned themselves on almost strictly communal lines on a motion to transfer two lakhs from the Dacca to the Calcutta grant. Fazlul Haque commented "this long-promised, long-deferred, long-wished for university has been a sort of eyesore to the intellectual savants who control the destinies of the Calcutta University".<sup>5</sup> There were some honourable exceptions to the communal line : Raja Manmathanath Roy Choudhury warned that "feeling in Eastern Bengal is very strong in this respect; and I think the disappointment will be very great if any portion of this grant is cut down",<sup>6</sup> and so did Nibaran Chandra Dasgupta, while Surendranath Mullick,

1. Dacca University Annual Report, 1923-1924.

2. The Bengalee, 27 Dec 1922, BNNR, Jan 1923.

3. The Servant, 17 Aug 1925, BNNR, Sept 1925.

4. BLCP, 17 March 1921, 218-219. Speech by Professor S.C. Mukherjee, Calcutta University representative.

5. Ibid., 239.

6. Ibid., 237.

later the first non-official chairman of Calcutta Corporation, scolded his fellow Hindus for their "spirit of parochial antipathy. The idea of taking away Rs 2,00,000 from this grant and giving it to the Calcutta University is a puerile and quarrelsome idea."<sup>1</sup>

Though the motion was later withdrawn, Hindus always saw expenditure on Dacca University as lavish, unnecessary and communally inspired.<sup>2</sup> Yet unlike Calcutta Dacca University had almost no other source of income except fees : a cut in the grant would have meant virtual closure. Moreover Dacca had no affiliated colleges, themselves Government supported, as essential elements in its structure though separately accounted for.<sup>3</sup> However logic was hardly an ingredient in this sectional rivalry, and given the animosity generated Government felt compelled in 1925 to make the grant to Dacca a statutory one. The voting pattern on this Bill showed total polarisation on communal lines, with scarcely a trace of regional allegiance to Dacca or Calcutta. Its passage did serve at least to eliminate one point of conflict.<sup>4</sup>

It was slightly illogical that the Hindus should have betrayed such animosity to Dacca University given that even at the end of our period 964 of the 1359 students there were Hindus, and that the staff, as has been seen, were overwhelmingly so. But the sharpness of feeling towards the rival institution was part of the disdain for and antipathy towards the Muslim community and competitors by the Hindu bhadralok, an example of Bengali Hindu chauvinism. For the Muslims, however, <sup>it</sup> was the attraction of Dacca and the

1. BLCP, 231-232. Khan Bahadur Khawaja Muhammad Azam of the Dacca Nawab family particularly resented the Hindu attitude since it was eastern Bengal which yielded the bulk of the provincial revenues.

2. The Hindustan, 22 May 1922, BNNR, June 1922. See also the Bengalee, 27 Dec 1922, Ibid. and the Hitavadi, the largest selling Bengali daily, 8 June 1927. BNNR July 1928.

3. Prabashi, Chaitra, 1328, (March-April 1921), 891-893 was almost alone in recognising the justice of the grant to Dacca, a teaching unit from the start, without affiliated colleges, years of grants and donations and high fee income.

4. BLCP, 14 Aug 1925.

Muslim Hall that they formed a large enough group to create their own society and to establish their own cultural identity free of Hindu condescension and intellectual arrogance.

In the eyes of the Education Department Dacca was to do more than that for its students, of course. Dacca was modelled in its teaching, tutorial and residential pattern on Oxford and Cambridge and Muslim students were "encouraged to assimilate the culture of the West as well as Islamic, culture". Not only that. "It is the aim of those responsible for its administration to turn out gentlemen who will have acquired something of what is best in oriental and occidental civilisations; and who will bring credit to their own country and become useful members of the Empire ... in which the culture of the East and the West can be mingled by creative and constructive co-operation." <sup>1</sup> But turning them into useful members of the Empire meant making them employable. Laying the foundation stone of Salimulla Hall, the Governor Stanley Jackson said, "The Muslim Hall will, I believe, be an almost unique institution in India. On the one hand it is intimately and organically connected with the Department of Islamic Studies ... which encourages the rapid increase in numbers of ordinary Muhammadan citizens, religious and cultured, and at the same time competent to sustain the struggle of life on even terms with their fellow subjects of other communities." <sup>2</sup>

To what extent did the Muslim Hall fulfill this role? Dacca University records have been neither well-preserved nor well-arranged - a full, continuous body of records is nowhere available. However, the available evidence does indicate a notable measure of success. From the alumni of the Hall there sprang a continuous flow of middle level recruits to the professions and the public service who formed the first solid Muslim middle class in Eastern Bengal.

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1. Speech by G.H. Langley, Vice Chancellor, Dacca University at the laying of the foundation stone of Salimulla Hall, 22 August 1929. Golden Jubilee Volume, 16.

2. Speech, 22 Aug 1929. Golden Jubilee Volume, 17.

The occupational pattern is significant enough : in the first five years, (1922-1927), forty-five Muslims passed out of the University and the Annual Reports show what positions they had achieved by 1932. One joined the Indian Forest Service, another was nominated to the Indian Police Service, three became Deputy Collectors, two Income-Tax officers, three Assistant Income Tax officers, nine Sub-Deputy-Collectors, eleven College Lecturers, two Librarians, one a Sub-Inspector of Schools, one a Superintendent and another a Principal of a Madrassa, five Assistant School Masters, one a Police Sub-Inspector, one an Auditor of the Co-operative Society at Comilla, two Sub-Inspectors of Excise and two became clerks.<sup>1</sup>

Of this early intake many ended with very distinguished careers : five became Ministers of Pakistan, three Governors of East Pakistan, one a High Court judge, three Vice-Chancellors, another Chief Whip of the Muslim League, another Speaker of the East Pakistan Assembly, and another, Altaf Hussain, was editor of the influential Muslim League daily published in Calcutta.<sup>2</sup> The influence of Muslim Hall students in the political and intellectual life of eastern Bengal and of Bangladesh could hardly be overstressed. Roughly half of those here listed came from the villages - sons of petty landlords, jotedars, taluqdars and other well-to-do peasants - half from urban middle and lower-middle class families. Most of them received some sort of financial help either from the University or from Government. In return they entered Government service, as a westernised elite they helped to bring their community out of its isolating orthodoxy, and in many cases they provided that Muslim political leadership which the British had sought as a counterpoise to the dominant Hindus. Many strands of educational policy thus came to be woven together in Salimulla Hall.

Muslim education in Bengal grew along two parallel lines; through special institutions with their own structure and organisation and through the general

1. Dacca University Annual Reports - 1930, 1931 and 1932.

2. See reminiscences of Professor Sirajul Islam Choudhury, Vice-Chancellor Zillur Rahman Siddiqi and Professor Syed Maqsud Ali, Golden Jubilee Volume, 71-73, 51, 81-82. The last of the three writers comments on the strong western cultural impress of Salimulla Hall, the middle class values, the presence of "everything intended to help create a social elite".

institutions. By evolving a separate structure, the Muslims working in close alliance with the Government hoped to break the long-standing resistance of the conservative members of their community towards English education. The Government, though it might doubt the wisdom of separate development — the special institutions were relatively inefficient and partly because of that, were wasteful too —<sup>1</sup> evidently regarded this as a transitory phase which would lead on to full Muslim participation in the general structure. To that end the Government also moved to make the general institutions more acceptable to the Muslims by removing what might be considered objectionable features of those institutions.

These were but two means to one single end : at the elite level to raise a Muslim middle class as a counter to the unreliable Hindu middle class and at the mass level through primary education to turn Muslim numerical superiority into an electoral advantage. But it would have been useless to leave these new products of the educational system to compete directly with the better educated Hindus in public services which, in an underdeveloped economy, were the biggest source of employment. Hence there flowed reservation of a proportion of government service for Muslims — and from 1924, in order to conceal how much lower the educational standards of Muslims and the depressed classes still were than those of the Hindu *bhadralok*, separate competitions for each group.<sup>2</sup> Few can have been much deceived. Given the very restricted employment opportunities in Bengal, the influx of Muslim competitors thus preferentially treated was bitterly resented. The two major communities were driven ever further apart.

The special educational arrangements for the Muslims arose out of their

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1. Even the Dacca Muslim High School, one of the best known special institutions in Bengal, was according to Hornell at once one of the costliest and the least efficient of Government High Schools, though its Muslim character attracted many. Hornell, Note, 11 May 1923. GB-Edn., 18 R-5.A15-57. Sept 1926.

2. In 1913 when Shamsul Huda's proposal for reservation of a fixed proportion of jobs was under discussion, F.W. Duke, a Member of the Bengal Executive Council, noted that under Bengal's policy of preferential treatment a Muslim graduate had many times more chance of obtaining public employment than a Hindu. Duke, Note, 18 Oct 1913. GB-Appointment, 5 M-232 (1-5). A33-37. July 1914.

wish to safeguard their own religious and social identity. In the nineteenth century the consciousness of that identity had been powerfully reinforced by a number of factors - the Wahabi and Faraizi movements, Hindu revivalism, even the great mass <sup>of</sup> puthi literature. In the twentieth century this consciousness manifested itself in the demand for separate educational institutions, special officers, special text-books, special concessions to Muslim students. No doubt these further strengthened the cultural separatism of the Muslims. But the logical outcome of that was not, or need not have been political separatism. The fact that eventually a political separation came about represented a failure not so much in the educational field but in that of political leadership - of both the communities.

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