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THE PROBLEM
OF
SECONDARY EDUCATION
IN BENGAL



PROF. NARESH CHANDRA ROY, M. A.



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The Problem of Secondary Education in Bengal.

The whole educational organisation of Bengal is now in a state of flux. Elementary education is of course only in the initial stage of development. It has not yet been seriously taken up by the Government. A number of primary schools exists indeed in every district, but no systematic efforts have so far been made and no requisite organisation has up till now been reared for imparting elementary instruction on a free and universal basis. The problem of primary education in Bengal is consequently that of initial organisation. Different, however, is the case with higher and secondary education. In these spheres a machinery exists for the instruction of the boys and to some extent of the girls as well. But this machinery has proved defective and with the lapse of time appears to have gone out of gear. This is more so in respect of secondary than of higher education. The latter system has its own defects no doubt. But these drawbacks would not have proved so harmful if the secondary education was efficient. But instruction in the secondary institutions has come to be so insufficient, so unscientific and so much below the expected standard, that it cannot but have its repercussions upon higher education. The materials supplied by the secondary schools remain too raw to be moulded into truly finished products. If therefore education is to be made more fruitful and efficient, the secondary education must first be reformed and improved. It is only on the basis of sound secondary education that the superstructure of effective higher education can be built.

But it is not merely for the sake of higher education that a demand should go forth for the reorganisation

of secondary institutions. Education in this stage must be reformed and made more effective for its own sake as well. It is not expected that all the students who come out of the secondary schools should flock to the colleges for higher education. It is expected no doubt that a good portion of them should go in for university training but a far larger portion must inevitably seek some career with the education received in the schools as the basic capital. But it has been pointed out by the Sadler Commission that the Matriculates of Bengal are as a rule fit neither for higher education nor for any professional or commercial career. Ten years of study in a school do not place them in a position to chalk out for themselves any particular line of activity. Once out of the schools they are at sea. It is essential that the education in the schools should be so strengthened as to make the Matriculates quite competent to take, without further training, to some commercial, industrial, or agricultural career.

The education received in the schools has deteriorated from year to year. The University Commission which reported in 1919 definitely bore testimony to this gradual deterioration. From the same institution what the father had derived, the son did not receive. The quality of instruction had suffered appreciably in the interval. Several factors have combined to reduce secondary education in Bengal, which was never very efficient, to such an impotent state. If however Bengal is to advance socially, politically and economically, the secondary education in the province must be reorganised and revitalised. It is imperative therefore that the causes of the gradual decline in the efficiency of the schools should be carefully analysed and methods of their eradication suggested and carried out.

The thirst for education is a pre-eminent characteristic of the Bengalee people. The middle classes, especially, have all along regarded it as an essential concomitant of their life. The amount of sacrifice which middle class parents undertake with alacrity for the education of their children is as pathetic as it is admirable. They are ready to remain poor but not ignorant at the same time. This enthusiasm for secondary and higher education which

had been originally confined to the higher and middle classes became gradually and increasingly emulated by the other groups of the people of Bengal.

This increasing demand for secondary education was met in Bengal mostly by private efforts. It was in 1835 that the dispute between the Anglicists and the Orientalists was finally settled in favour of the former. It became henceforward the avowed policy of the Government to provide for English education among the people. But during the next twenty years it was not found possible to raise the number of secondary English schools to more than forty-seven in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. In 1854, Sir Charles Wood, President of the Board of Control, sent out a despatch which embodied a new scheme of educational organisation. It wanted the Government in this country to put greater emphasis upon elementary education and to depend for the spread of secondary and higher education on private efforts. In the following year according to the instruction of Sir Charles, departments of public instruction were instituted in this country and a departure was made at once from the policy followed so far. It was laid down that in the field of secondary education the Government would only supplement private efforts in most cases. An arrangement was made for a system of grant-in-aid and inspection. Once a school would be started on private initiative and raised to a requisite standard of efficiency, it might apply for and receive grant-in-aid from the Government. Such was the enthusiasm for education that within eighteen months of the inauguration of this policy seventy-nine English schools applied for grant. The number of High Schools now increased by leaps and bounds. By 1871, there were 133 of them and at the close of another decade the number rose to 209. Of the new schools started many were not even enjoying the Government grant, far from being managed by Government department itself.

There were now consequently three classes of High Schools —(1) those managed by the Government, (2) those established and managed by private individuals but enjoying grant-in-aid from the Government, (3) and lastly those which were esta-

blished and managed by individuals and dependent on private resources alone. As the number of schools increased, the proportion of the last category became greater. The number of High Schools rose from 209 in 1882, to 535 in 1902 and it was calculated that one-third of the secondary schools did not enjoy any grant-in-aid and depended entirely on the precarious fee fund and spasmodic private donations. By the year 1915, the proportion of unaided schools increased further. In this year there were 586 High Schools in Bengal and Assam. Of these 42 were managed either by the Government or by some other public authorities and the rest were privately managed. Of these latter 225 enjoyed aid while 319 had entirely to shift for themselves. More than 50 per cent. of the High Schools had thus to depend wholly on private resources. If the schools in Assam were excluded, percentage would be higher still. This peculiarity of the educational organisation Bengal is brought out into relief when we find that in the same year in Bombay, of the 99 High Schools 16 only depended entirely on private resources and in Madras out of 170 High Schools only 4 were of this category. In 1932 it was calculated that out of 1268 unaided secondary schools in the whole of British India as many as 903 were in Bengal. Every five years the number of High Schools grew apace. In 1921-22 it was 878, in 1926-27, 985, in 1931-32, 1076. In the last two years the number has been further added to. The recent Annual Report of the Education Department places the figure at more than 1100. Of these more than 600 do not receive any grant-in-aid either from the Government or from any other public authority.

The preponderance of private unaided High Schools in the educational organisation of Bengal points out on the one hand to the demand for education of the Bengalee people and on the other to their indifference to the quality of instruction they receive. They have shown more enthusiasm for the hall-mark of the University than for the intrinsic value of education and culture. If they paid any attention to the quality of instruction imparted in the schools, certainly they would have been impelled to strengthen the financial foundations of the institutions

they started. But as they have been rather indifferent to this question, they allowed schools to be established practically with no source of income except the fee fund. It should be recognised of course that there are certain schools which depend absolutely on private resources but which all the same have established an unrivalled reputation for their efficiency. But the number of such schools is very limited. Most of the other institutions of this description live only hand to mouth and the result is as it should be expected. One of the main reasons for the secondary education in Bengal to become so ineffective and so unfruitful is that about half the schools do not receive any grant-in-aid from the Government and even those which receive it get in most cases only an insufficient sum.

A private unaided school naturally suffers from financial stringency. The genesis of these institutions is interesting. Some times a local Zamindar would like to perpetuate the memory of his father or mother and establish a school on that score. He would however provide only a piece of land and some money for building thereon the school house. If he was more generous he might make an arrangement for some furniture as well. But certainly except in rare cases he would not provide for any recurring grant for the institution. Some local men would be enlisted as teachers and they must be satisfied with the precarious payment of the salary which may be made possible by the collection of fees from the students. Now and again an educational enthusiast might take it into his head to establish a high school in a particular locality. He might not be a monied man himself. But he would move from door to door and collect subscriptions. When in this way some money would accumulate, a school building would be reared. The flow of subscriptions would however not be unlimited. Gradually it would be unsteady and precarious. Fee fund would be the only source of income. Even when a school would manage to secure grant-in-aid from the Government it would not be of a sumptuous character. As a rule, a school does not receive more than Rs. 100 to 150/ a month from the Government as grant-in-aid.

The income of the schools being so slender and so precarious,

it would only be expected that the pay of the teachers would be absolutely miserable. In the beginning of this century, we find that the salary scale in a Government school would vary from Rs. 25/- to Rs. 200 per mensem while in privately managed schools it would range from Rs. 5/- to 78/-. In 1913 in a resolution issued by the Government of India we come across the facts that out of 4,700 teachers in privately managed high schools in Bengal and Assam 4,200 were in receipt of less than Rs. 50/- per month, some 3,300 of less than Rs. 30/- a month, "while many teachers of English and classical languages drew salaries that would not attract men to superior domestic service." In the recent Quinquennial Review of Education issued by the Government of Bengal we notice that the average salary of a high school teacher in Bengal is Rs. 55.8. This figure was arrived at by including the salaries received by the Government school teachers in the total amount. But if we limit the enquiry to the privately managed schools alone, the average monthly salary would not exceed any way Rs. 45/- per month. It should be further noted that the salary entered in the books against the name of a particular teacher is not always equal to the amount he actually receives. Even the authors of the recent Quinquennial Review have referred to the benevolences and forced subscriptions to which the teachers are not infrequently subjected in private institutions. Not only the pay of the teachers is comparatively very low in Bengal and consequently the quality of teaching is below par but otherwise also the equipment of a high school is much below the standard expected in this province. The library facilities, provisions for games, and other opportunities for corporate life are too insufficient. This is exemplified by the average annual cost of a boy's training in a secondary school in Bengal. It is half of such cost in provinces like Bombay and U.P.

In England the average salary of the Head Master of a secondary school was years ago £390 annually. In other words he would be in receipt of more than Rs. 450 a month, while that of the Head Master of a High School in Bengal is in average Rs. 85/- or thereabouts. An assistant teacher of a British

secondary school would in average receive near about Rs. 200 per month before the War while the average salary of an assistant teacher in this province is less than Rs. 40/. There may be people who would object to any comparison being instituted between the salary scale in England and that in Bengal. The standard of living in the two regions is too different, they would argue, for such comparison. But in the civil services the salary scale in Bengal bears quite a different proportion to that in vogue in Great Britain. We may let alone the emoluments of the I.C.S. officers. It may be pointed out that the salary of these incumbents is only a compensation for imported labour, and necessarily it is exorbitantly high. It should consequently be no argument for establishing the case that civil servants in India get more than their compeers in Great Britain. But even if the salary scale of the Indian Civil Service is excluded from consideration, still it is easy to prove that the scale is not much higher in England than what is in vogue in this province. The Deputy Magistrates in Bengal began their career till the other day on Rs. 250/ a month. But in England a superior civil servant would start his career at £200 a year or in other words at a little over Rs. 200 per month. The recent salary scale set up in Bengal is also not much lower than what is assured to an average civil servant of the administrative grade in England. If the emoluments of a Civil Servant in Bengal may be almost the same as those of a Civil Servant in England, the wide disparity in the salary scale of High School teachers in the two countries should certainly give food for thinking.

As the salary scale of the teachers in Bengal is low, so their number per school is also half of that in Madras. In the latter province the average number of teachers per High School is 20.1, while that in Bengal is 12.1. Poor salary and high pressure of work are the bane of the secondary education in Bengal. No educational system can ever prove a success unless the students are placed under the supervision and guidance of efficient and zealous teachers. The teachers really occupy the basic position in every educational organisation. Even the most scientifically arranged curriculum fails to mould

the mind of the students unless it is worked by a band of inspiring teachers. To create enthusiasm in the boys and girls for steady and persistent work is the first desideratum. But unless a teacher is physically alert, and intellectually quick, he cannot inspire any confidence in the young students and the latter consequently fail to benefit much by their contact with him.

It is hardly possible that a middle-aged man with a good number of dependents to support but with the slender monthly income of Rs. 30 or Rs. 40 will maintain his moral optimism, his intellectual vision and his physical alertness. He will inevitably become timid and pessimistic in outlook and lose his physical smartness and intellectual quickness and along with them he will alienate the confidence of his wards as well. Even men with good antecedents gradually deteriorate under the existing conditions of service in a school and after five or six years of experience in such an institution they lose all their old enthusiasm and vigour. The prospects in the teaching profession being so dismal, very few men now take to it by choice. Only those who find other avenues of respectable employment absolutely barred against them think it worthwhile to become school teachers. This profession has consequently become the dumping ground of the failures in other fields of activity. A teacher again may be to some extent efficient if he could devote all his attention and energy to school work. But in fact he has further to tax his brain and draw upon his fund of physical energy in some way supplementing the little income the school assures to him. Either he has to become the agent of some insurance company, the private tutor of some well-to-do pupils or he has to devote a considerable portion of his time to the management of some business of his own. In any case he has as a rule to divide his time between school and personal work. This certainly saps the little efficiency with which he might have otherwise worked in the school.

If the secondary education in Bengal is to be raised out of the rut the number of teachers will have to be increased in every school by at least 25 per cent. and their salary must be made

respectable. In the rural areas Rs. 50 should be the minimum salary given to a High School teacher while the maximum for an assistant teacher should not be less than Rs. 150. A head master must be assured in every school of a grade running from Rs. 125 to Rs. 200. In the municipal areas, the salary should be ten per cent. higher than in the rural areas. It was proved in Bengal more than anywhere else in India how a good teacher could fire the imagination of the youth and bring about a complete revolution in their outlook on life. Barely one century ago, Henry Derozio, a young man of vision, was put in charge of the students in the Hindu College. It is now a common place of the history of 19th century Bengal how he moulded their mind and how he instilled into them new thoughts and ideas. The achievements of Derozio illustrate most aptly the dictum of Bismarck that young men are like clay to be moulded and shaped by the teachers any way they chose. But once we look at the difference between the ability and achievements of Derozio and those of his modern successors in the secondary schools of Bengal, we become immediately convinced that something drastic should be done without delay for revolutionising the status of the teachers.

The question arises whether with the improvement of the salary scale of the teachers it should be demanded that they should be as a rule trained and possess a teaching diploma to that effect. Of late in Bengal some emphasis is being placed on trained teachers in secondary institutions. This is especially so in the Government schools. In aided institutions also it is a condition of the Government grant-in-aid that at least one of the teachers should have a teaching degree. In Madras the hobby for trained teachers has been carried almost to an extreme. More than 77 per cent. of the teachers is trained in this Presidency. But it appears that this enthusiasm for training is absolutely misplaced so far as the secondary education is concerned. It is in the primary stages that this technical training in teaching becomes a necessity on the part of the teachers. They have to deal with girls and boys of a tender age. They have to guide pupils whose mind is only in an amorphous state. It

becomes absolutely necessary for the teacher to have a technical acquaintance with the psychology of these children and apply those methods of teaching which may appeal to the varying stages of their mental development. On this score special training in child psychology and the different new methods of teaching 3R's is a desideratum. But for the teachers in the secondary schools who are in charge of grown up boys and girls such training is not really of much useful purpose. What they require most is a thorough general education with specialised knowledge in certain particular subjects. In the Public Schools of England, the teachers are not expected to have any professional training. They have only a liberal University education to their credit. In Bengal the public should demand that most of their teachers should be bonafide students of the subjects they are required to teach. To this end, it should be made a rule that in ordinary circumstances none but Honours men should be appointed to these offices. An Honours degree certainly guarantees that they were serious students in the University and had not only acquired good grounding in their own subjects but had otherwise also their eyes and ears opened and spirit of enquiry awakened and strengthened. It is such men who should alone be in charge of boys in the secondary schools.

Another impediment to sound education in the schools in Bengal is the existing curriculum. It does not help really in disciplining the intellect, widening the vision and steadying and systematising the ideas of the students. The University Commission of 1917-18 observed that Mathematics was the one subject taught that provided for an intellectual drill to some extent. No other subject however was taught in a thorough and systematic fashion. Sanskrit or Persian is now a compulsory subject for boys. But nothing is more defective than the teaching of this classical subject. What is so famous as classical discipline in the west, is absolutely unknown to us in Bengal. This subject is taught in the most mechanical way. It neither improves the reasoning faculty nor rationalises the outlook of the boys. To some extent it may help the development of the memory. But that too is problematic. As regards the teaching

of the vernacular language and literature, it may be said at once that no importance is attached to it yet. What the boys pick up is only some desultory information ; they do not get any organic and comprehensive training in this subject. Naturally it leaves as a rule no impress upon their tastes and outlook. Nor does it impart to them any insight into human character. True grasp of a particular literature is indicated by the clarity of thought and expression which it ensures to a student. But very few products of the secondary schools in Bengal can think systematically and express their thoughts clearly and correctly in Bengali. This deficiency is not the result of any innate defect in the Bengali boys. In the old Hindu College, boys of 15 or 16 were found to discuss at ease the features of the different characters of Shakespeare's drama or bring into critical review the fundamental ideas of philosophers like Bentham. But no such critical appreciation can be expected to-day of the students who have finished their secondary education. Nor can it be said that the boys who are allowed to neglect their vernacular are given any comprehensive training in the English language and literature. It is the experience of every one that after ten years of study of this subject, very few of the boys can express their thoughts through this medium. The average boys can hardly in fact string one sentence in English correctly and at ease. The English language is supposed to be the window through which an Indian boy is to get a full view of western culture and civilisation. But a boy who cannot read one sentence of English writing without difficulty and cannot compose one sentence at ease is certainly not expected to profit much by his knowledge of this language. He cannot take advantage of it either for extending his general culture or for adding to his specialised knowledge in some particular subject. History and Geography again are now optional subjects in the Matriculation Classes. In the lower forms they are compulsory no doubt but taught in the most haphazard and perfunctory fashion. The result is that most of the youngmen who have completed their secondary education suffer from a lamentable lack of historical and geographical information. It is expected that boys of 15 or 16 should have a

good idea of the geography of the world in which they happen to live. They should also be acquainted not only with the outline of the general history of their own country from the ancient times to the modern but should also be expected to have a judgment of their own as to the achievements and pitfalls of the Indian people in the different periods of their history. If a British Public School boy, fourteen or fifteen years of age, can discuss the necessity of Lancastrian Revolution or Charles I's execution, it should not be too much to expect that a boy of the same age in Bengal would give an estimate of his own of the civilisation during the Mauryas or administration during the Moghuls.

The University of Calcutta has not been unmindful of the disorganised character of the existing curriculum of the secondary studies in this province and its baneful effect upon the education and culture of the people. In December 1931, the question of reforming this condition of things came up for consideration in the Senate and a committee of ten was elected to look into the matter of overhauling the curriculum. This committee reporting six months later proposed fundamental changes in the subjects to be taught and examined. The status of the vernacular language, it recommended, should be raised. It was to consist of two full papers with 100 marks allotted to each of them. The teaching of Bengali language and literature was to be made comprehensive and systematic and to this end the proposed change was expected to be most helpful. History and Geography were no longer to remain optional subjects. They were to be made compulsory though only 100 marks were to be allotted to two together. It would have been better if both the two subjects were made independent and 100 marks were allotted to each of them. The classical language, and a modern language other than English and the vernacular of the candidate were recommended to be optional subjects, while Elementary Physics and Chemistry were after a specified period to be compulsory subjects. The changes suggested were accepted by the Senate in August next, and submitted to the Government for approval. It is regrettable that up till now the final approval

of the Government of Bengal has not been secured and the recommended alterations in the syllabus and curriculum are hanging fire.

It is expected that the strengthening of the curriculum which has been suggested will improve to a great extent the secondary education in Bengal. But without the removal of the great stumbling block, the medium of English, no revolutionary improvement can be expected. In fact without the substitution of Bengali for English as the medium of instruction and examination, the new curriculum itself cannot be applied. It would be impossible for the boys and girls to do justice to all these subjects unless they got their instruction and were to express their ideas and thoughts in their own language. The existing medium has been a serious handicap to the acquisition of true knowledge by the boys. The linguistic capacity of the Bengali student has been adjudged as of high order by competent authorities. The learning of a foreign language is however an art which only a few may have the knack to master. The vast majority of the students consequently find it very difficult to pick up the general rudiments of English language after a study for years together at school. But simply because it is the medium of instruction, they lag behind in other subjects as well. Fighting all the time against the dead weight of English, they get no opportunity of acquiring an organic knowledge of subjects like History or Civics. Mechanically they memorise their lessons, and literally vomit them in their answer books in an examination. Their mind is not kept on the alert. There is hardly any opportunity of mental gymnastic which alone can make the students think for themselves. They now make practically no use of their mind. English as a medium of instruction in fact only helps in blunting the edge of what is taught and actually deadens the learner's mind. His education becomes slipshod, not organic. He memorises some books but does not acquire grasp of any subject.

It was long brought home to the educationists of this province that vernacular should be the medium of instruction. Without this reform, no improvement could be effected in the

educational system of Bengal. The committee of the Senate of the Calcutta University which took up the question of changing the curriculum of studies was also entrusted with the function of considering the question of the medium of instruction. It recommended along with the changes suggested in the curriculum that except English literature, all the other subjects should be taught and examined as a rule through the vernacular. This recommendation was accepted by the Senate and sent up for the sanction of the Government of Bengal. After two years of silence, the Government recently informed the University that the broad principle of the change recommended was accepted and approved of by it but in respect of details there could be no decision before there was a conference between the representatives of the Government and those of the University. Nothing final had yet been done in this respect. If the reforms suggested by the University of Calcutta are initiated, they will, it is hoped, make for sounder education in the secondary schools in Bengal. Of course the change in the curriculum of studies and the medium of instruction must be combined with the improvement in the salary scale of the teachers and the consequent improvement in their quality of teaching. It should be repeated that the teachers are really the corner stone of the fabric of educational organisation.

There is one other direction along which the secondary education may be improved. The University of Calcutta has paid its attention to this aspect to some extent. But it is the conviction of many that a more whole-hearted vocational bias should be administered to the secondary education in this province. It is still the opinion of a good section of educationists in every country that a thorough humanistic training is the soundest basis of every vocation. It is Lord Macaulay who was the high priest of this theory in the last century. He was definitely of opinion that neither at school nor at college a student should be called upon to pick up the details of knowledge in that particular branch of work with which he would be concerned after his school or university career. His ideas are summed up clearly in the following paragraph taken from the report of a

committee of which he was the chairman in 1853. "...men who have been engaged up to one or two and twenty in studies which have no immediate connection with the business of any profession and of which the effect is merely to open, to invigorate, and to enrich the mind, will generally be found in the business of every profession, superior to men who have at eighteen or nineteen devoted themselves to the special studies of their calling." A man with a sound general education imparted to him at school or college could easily pick up the technical details of his profession within short notice. If however he neglected the general education which was to develop the higher powers of the mind and went in early for technical and vocational training, that was not likely to carry him far in life. This opinion of Macaulay still dominates the mind of many people in different countries. They still set their face against the combination of vocational with humanistic education at school. They point to the education available in the English Public Schools. It has had no vocational bias. It has been exclusively humanistic in character. But the products of these institutions have made themselves at home in different professions. With their eyes and ears opened, their character built up and their common sense and intelligence developed in the school, they have found it easy to adapt themselves to the environments and demands of different professions.

Whatever be the opinion of Macaulay and whatever be the experience of the English Public Schools, it has been found in this country that exclusive humanistic and literary education makes people in many cases averse to non-cultural professions. A vocational bias in the curriculum of studies has consequently become a necessity. If along with general education in letters and sciences, some emphasis is placed on a few vocational subjects, boys and girls will become more practical, and their training will be more realistic though at the same time their general intellectual equipment will not suffer. Now-a-days, a boy after finishing his secondary education finds himself at sea. He has not developed an aptitude for any particular profession or line of activity. If in his secondary course some vocational subjects are embodied, he may be attracted to one of the occu-

pations emphasised in them, and possibly take to it soon after his Matriculation examination. It appears therefore essential that some vocational subjects must be made compulsory in the curriculum of secondary education in Bengal. In the schools located in the rural areas, agriculture may very well be made a compulsory subject and to this end three or four bighas of land may be purchased by the school for an experimental farm. For those who would not go in for agricultural training, some industrial alternative may be found. Arrangements for umbrella-making, cane-work, short-hand and type-writing may be provided for. In the municipal areas, agricultural training may not be feasible in many cases, but emphasis on industrial pursuits may be quite practicable. What is to be clearly brought home is that such vocational subjects are not to be taken only as a diversion. A considerable portion of the total marks for the class and university examination, say one-fourth, should be allotted to them. That is the only way to enlist the serious interest of the students in these vocational studies. It may be pointed out that it would be financially impossible for an ordinary school to purchase a farm of four bighas and run it from year to year for experimental work. But it may be shown that except for the initial expenditure of three to five hundred rupees and the recurring expenditure on account of the salary of the teacher in charge, who must have a good general and agricultural training to his credit, the school will not be required to spend anything for the farm. It will pay its way. In the Phillipines, the school farms which are the most well-equipped, are all self-supporting. Here also the possibilities are that they will not only support themselves but may even contribute something to the pay-fund of the instructor. It all depends of course upon the interest the Head Master takes, the ability which the instructor shows and the enthusiasm for steady work which is awakened in the students. The expenses for the industrial education also are not likely to be great. Any way it is time for the curriculum to be so fundamentally modified that cultural and occupational education may be harmoniously combined in the secondary schools

If the reforms foreshadowed in the foregoing paragraphs are to be sincerely carried out, the money now spent upon secondary education must be considerably added to. Every school must enjoy a handsome grant-in-aid from the Government. But the number of recognised High Schools is now about 1200 in Bengal. Besides there are about 2,000 Middle Schools which provide for some secondary classes. In a Conference held at the Government House towards the close of 1933 under the chairmanship of the Minister for Education, opinion was expressed by certain gentlemen that the number of High Schools was unnecessarily large in this province. It might without any detriment to the interests of secondary education be reduced to four to five hundred. Such reduction could alone, they thought, make for financial solvency of the High Schools. It was not possible for the Government to come to the financial assistance worth the name of so many schools. If however the number was brought down to about five hundred, an adequate grant-in-aid could be arranged. Hence if quality was to be improved, quantity must be sacrificed to some extent.

The reduction in the number of High Schools appears however to be unjustified. The secondary classes in the Middle Schools may be of course withdrawn and these schools reduced to the status of primary institutions. In some of them, if funds are available, some secondary classes may be maintained but only as a continuation arrangement. Those students who will not go in for secondary education but will like to remain for some time longer at school may profit by this arrangement. But this apart, the Middle Schools should have no place in the new scheme of things. They served a useful purpose when secondary education was not quite popular. A time may come again when elementary education itself may be raised to the existing middle standard. But at present this latter does not constitute any landmark in the educational organisation. It exceeds the requirements of elementary education and falls far short of the standard of secondary education. It is not complete by itself. It is only preparatory to the higher secondary course. A Middle School consequently may be abolished without any

way jeopardising the true interests of education in the province.

As for the High Schools, their number does not appear to be too many. We are told that the average number of students on the roll in a secondary institution is gradually diminishing. In 1916-17 in the Burdwan Division, it was 312, in 1932 it was only 233. Out of 227 High Schools in this Division, again no less than 133 had less than 200 pupils each. If the number of schools was halved, the average number of pupils per school would be raised to about 500 and a school of this size alone may be taken as a truly economical unit. But this reduction will deprive boys and girls in many localities of the benefit of secondary education. People in most cases are too poor to send their wards to a boarding house. They must either attend school from home or go without schooling. Concentration of secondary education in a small number of High Schools thus amounts in practice to the withdrawal of educational opportunity from many young men. Secondly it should not be supposed that the number of boys now attending secondary schools will remain what it is at present. It must inevitably grow. About three hundred thousand boys now attend High Schools. In a total population of fifty million, this number appears to be small. This may be doubled in due course. This contingency should be specially in mind in view of the fact that girls will go in for secondary education in an increasing number and the establishment of separate girls' schools not being feasible in many places, arrangements for co-education will in all possibility have to be encouraged. In England there were in 1914, 397 secondary schools for boys, 349 for girls, and 231 for both girls and boys, receiving grants-in-aid from the Board of Education. There were besides many schools which did not receive any such grant. It must also be borne in mind that in England elementary education is compulsory up to the 14th year. So many boys and girls for whom there is no provision for secondary education receive also a kind of education which is not inferior to what our boys and girls receive in the so-called secondary institutions. In Japan there are 700

High Schools for girls and 500 for boys. In these 500 schools 300,000 boys receive humanistic education. But although the number of such secondary schools for humanistic studies is only 500 which is less than half of the existing number in Bengal, it should be known that side by side these institutions, 798 vocational schools are in existence. There are 104 technical schools, 330 agricultural schools, 229 commercial schools, 12 merchant marine schools, 10 Aquatic Products schools, and 113 industrial crafts schools. These vocational schools receive students direct from the primary schools. So it may be said that there are altogether 1293 secondary schools both humanistic and vocational in Japan. In Bengal however the few technical and professional schools that are working at present are mostly open only to those who have finished their secondary education. Comparing the position of Bengal with that of Japan and England in respect of the number of secondary schools, we cannot say that it is too many in this province.

Of course it should be admitted that the distribution of the existing schools is too haphazard and inequitable. In Barisal where the total population is about 30 lacs, and the density is 834 per square mile, the number of high schools is 84. In Dinajpore however the total number of high schools is only 11 although the population is about 17½ lacs and the density is 445 per square mile. In Faridpur with a total population of about 24 lacs and density of 1003 per square mile there are 59 schools whereas in Jalpaiguri with a population of about 10 lacs and density of 335, the number of schools is only 8. There is thus a case for better distribution but not for reduction.

Distribution of schools cannot of course be undertaken off hand. There are many difficulties in the way which must be met. In many places the schools may have been started on the basis of an endowment created by some private individual. The conditions of this endowment cannot be brushed aside and the school amalgamated with some other institution. In some areas again the demand for secondary education may be out of all proportion to the number of school-going people in that locality. In other areas however the situation may be quite

the reverse. It stands to reason therefore that the number of schools need not be strictly in proportion to the number of inhabitants and the extent of area of a district. It must have some relation to the actual demand for secondary education as well. What is wanted therefore under the circumstances is a detailed survey of the conditions of secondary education in Bengal. In the last Government House Conference it was proposed that such a survey should be undertaken, and the materials collected on the basis of which alone the number of secondary schools which each district should have to its credit might be ascertained. About a year has passed by since then but nothing has been done so far in this direction. It is time that this survey should be taken up as early as possible. The success of the survey of course depends much on the personnel of the committee which will be entrusted with this work. If it is constituted by men who are inimical to the interests of education in this province, the survey will do more harm than good. The Government should see to it that it consists of men in the full possession of their intellectual freshness, mental vigour, and constructive imagination. Younger men who will really understand the problem and devote detailed attention to the work should alone be chosen as members of the Committee.

It has been recognised by all sections of the people that the existing system of control over the secondary schools is the most unscientific and should be replaced by some saner and more rational method. At present the Government and the aided schools are under a dual control. So far as the Government Schools are concerned, it goes without saying that they are under the direct authority of the Education Department of the Government of Bengal. The aided schools are also largely controlled by it. Unless conditions specified by the Director of Public Instruction are fulfilled by these institutions, they are not eligible for the financial grant of the Government. To this end these schools are subjected to a periodical inspection by the Government Inspectors. They audit the accounts, test the students, look round the environments and see that the con-

ditions laid down by the Government are observed by the school concerned. It is upon the report of this inspection that the grant-in-aid is dependent. The syllabus of the Schools and the medium of instruction are also determined by the Education Department up to the VIII standard. The text books are similarly selected for the boys and girls of these classes by a Text Book Committee set up by the Government. It is only in case of the two highest classes of the secondary schools that the syllabus and the text books are settled by the University. So far extends the control of the Government.

But the schools are also under the authority of the University. Every school is ambitious to send up students for the Matriculation Examination held by the University. In fact the efficiency of every school is judged by the public according to the number of successful candidates sent up by it for such examination. It is for the University however to decide whether candidates from a particular institution should be admitted to this examination or not. Just as the Government has built up a body of rules and regulations for awarding grant-in-aid to secondary schools, so the University also has laid down certain conditions on the fulfilment of which alone it recognises a particular school. When it applies for affiliation to the University, it points out whether it is already conforming to the rules framed by the University. If the University is satisfied that the school is acting up to the rules and is otherwise well-managed, affiliation is granted to it for a temporary period and it is allowed to send up candidates for the Matriculation Examination. In case the school continues to abide by the University regulations and shows successful results, the recognition is allowed to run on. Now the question arises as to how the University is to know that either during the time of first application for affiliation or in subsequent years the school is actually observing the rules of management laid down by the University authorities. The University has no school inspectorate of its own. It has no doubt an Inspector of Colleges who may be and actually is sent on occasions to inspect a school and report its conditions to the University Syndicate.

There is also a Syndicate Committee on Schools, the members of which may on some particular occasions visit a school and report their impressions to the Syndicate. But this way only some emergency can be met. The regular inspection work cannot be undertaken by these representatives. For this the University has to depend upon the inspecting agency of the Government of Bengal. When a particular school applies for affiliation, the University asks the Director of Public Instruction to arrange for the inspection and report. The Director sends it on to the Inspector of the Division in which the school is located and the latter at his convenience visits the school, looks into its conditions and sends up a report of his impressions to the University through the Director. So although the University is the affiliating authority, the voice of the Government Inspector counts for much. Similarly when once the school has been granted affiliation, it has to subject itself to the periodical inspection of the Government Inspector, even though the school does not enjoy any Government grant. The Inspector comes and visits not as the agent of the Government but on behalf of the University.

So over the schools both the Government and the University exercise control. We are told that this dual control is unhappy and is leading to the decline in the efficiency of the institutions. The success of this arrangement depends upon the most cordial co-operation between the University and the Government department. But such co-operation is possible only when the two authorities approach the educational problems from the same angle of vision, and are of the same mind and outlook with regard to the educational ideals. As however such identity of views is not possible in two differently constituted authorities, cordial co-operation naturally becomes out of the question. A school applies for affiliation. The Inspector of the Division is deputed to look into its conditions. He sends an adverse report to the University. But the school authorities may prove to the satisfaction of the School Committee of the Syndicate that the conclusion of the Inspector is erroneous. The Syndicate now in a fix deposes the Inspector of Colleges to visit the school.

This officer forms on visit a different idea of the school management and submits in consequence a favourable report to the University. The result is that the school becomes recognised inspite of the antagonism of the Government Inspector. A heart-burning is thus created and the relations between the two authorities become strained. It is now argued that the authority which will admit the candidates of the schools to the Matriculation Examination will also be responsible for arranging the inspection, distributing the grants, and for framing all other rules and regulations for the management of these institutions. In other words, instead of serving two masters, the Schools should be under the control of one authority.

The proposal of a Board of Secondary Education has been to this end long before the public. It was the Sadler Commission which mooted this proposal first in its report submitted fifteen years ago. It was of opinion that the University should be relieved of the incubus of secondary education no doubt but the public of this province would not agree to hand over the control over these institutions to a Government department. In case a Board representing the various interests of the province was constituted, the control over secondary education might be made over to it. Since the recommendation of the Sadler Commission was made, education has become a transferred subject placed in charge of a Minister responsible to the representatives of the people. It may consequently be argued that the objections which might be entertained years ago against the undivided control over secondary education being vested in the Education Department are no longer valid. As this Department is now responsive to popular opinion, the nature of control exercised by it will not be in any way at variance with popular wishes. In England we are told that although theoretically education is under the final control and supervision of a Board, actually the Board never meets and its President, the Minister of Education, is the one man responsible for the exercise of this control. What is done in England may also be followed in this province and full authority over secondary education may be handed over to the Minister in charge. But

the old prejudice against the Department of Education is not a thing of the past. It lingers still. Nor could it be said that the continuance of this prejudice is any way unjustified. The Department is still wedded to the old traditions and imbued with the old ideals. It has not up till now developed any new outlook or given a new orientation to its policy. That the prejudice against the Department will linger is consequently not anything unexpected.

It may also be assumed that the Department will not in the near future turn over a new leaf and become popular in its attitude and ideas. Besides, the control over secondary education in Bengal involves the decisions of questions which in England do not generally trouble the Department of Education at Whitehall. The question of curricula and the selection of text books for instance is decided by the Head Master in consultation with the school committee. In Bengal however there is absolute centralisation in this field. Local choice is not allowed at all. If these problems are to be solved centrally there must be a Central Board to this end. These are duties which can be done best only by a committee. They can be discharged only in a perfunctory way by individuals. Besides curricula and the selection of text books there are also other problems involved which admit only of committee management. It is therefore imperative that there must be an independent central board for the control of secondary education. There is a point of view that the Government Department should itself remain responsible for the exercise of such control but it should take counsel with an advisory board on certain questions. But public opinion in this province is unequivocally pronounced against such an advisory committee. If the University is to part with its responsibility in the field of secondary education, it can do it only in favour of a separate autonomous Board in which the public will have confidence.

The Board consisting of ten to fifteen members and headed by a whole time Chairman should be given all the responsibility which at present is exercised by the University and the Government Department separately. The total amount of annual grant-

in-aid to be given to the schools is first of all to be determined by the Board and the Government should be persuaded to accept the proposal of the Board in this respect. Once it is done, the total amount should be made over to the Board which on its own responsibility is to disburse the amount in its own way. The inspectors will be appointed and paid by the Government but their services will be exclusively at the disposal of the Board and their transfer and promotion should be determined by the Government only on the recommendations of the Board. The Board should stand in the same relation to the Department of Education as the University of Calcutta.

The reform of secondary education in Bengal has been long overdue and it should not be allowed to hang fire any longer. It is time that the educationists in the province should take up the question in earnest and persuade the Government to solve it early and satisfactorily
