

CHAPTER XIV

EDUCATION

INDIGENOUS SYSTEM

UNDER the old Municipal system of the Hindus each village had its chief, its accountant, its priest, smith, carpenter, potter, barber, washermen, poet, doctor and last but not least its village or hedge school master, the *guru mahasaya*, who presided over the village *pathshala*. In 1835 Mr. Adam calculated that there were more than 100,000 of these schools in Bengal and Behar. In 1802 the Magistrate of Burdwan reported "that there are few villages of any note in which there is not a school but the instruction in them is confined to the teaching of children to read and write." The children of Muhammadan parents usually received their education in the common branches from the village school masters. But in villages where Muhammadans were numerous the Hindu *pathshala* was usually replaced by a *maktab*. In the Hindu *pathshala* the teacher (*guru mahasaya*) was a poor Kayesth or less often a Brahman, who was usually paid in kind, or was given a contribution in cowries by each boy's family, and also got a small share of grain at harvest time. The school was held in his hut, and often in fine weather under some tree in the village. Here the boys were taught reading, writing and mental arithmetic. They practised writing with ink on palm or plantain leaves, or with chalk on the floor, and after they had learnt the Bengali alphabet, some small collections of verses were committed to memory. Particular attention was paid to mental arithmetic and mensuration, the boys learning by heart the verses of one Bhriguram Das, better known as the Subhankari, which contain formulæ for calculating arithmetical figures, interest, land measurements, etc. Boys were sent to the *pathshala* in their fifth year and stayed there three to six years. In *maktabs*, the teacher (*akhungi*) taught arithmetic and the

rudiments of Persian or Urdu, the boys writing not only on leaves but also on country paper. The bulk of the pupils finished their education in these elementary schools, and then followed their hereditary occupations. Many of the Kayesths went on to the landlords' *kacharis* and learnt zamindari accounts, thus qualifying for employment as writers or *gumashtas* (agents). A few read at home the vernacular versions of the epics or Puranas while Brahmans studied the rudiments of Sanskrit under some *pandit* in the neighbourhood, and thus qualified themselves for the priesthood.

The more ambitious of the Brahmans, however, were not so easily satisfied and studied at one or other of the educational centres in Bengal containing *tols* or Sanskrit colleges. The most famous of these were at Nadia and in its neighbourhood, but there were smaller circles at Bhangamoda in this district, Bhatpara in the 24-parganas, and in Howrah at Bally. The students resided in the house of some learned *pandits* and were treated as members of the family, doing domestic work, and if they had means, contributing to the cost of the household. Every pupil learnt grammar in the first instance for some years, and then read some easy literary works. After this he selected some special subject for study, usually higher literature, *nyaya* or logic, and *smriti* or law. The whole period of learning lasted usually from eight to sixteen years. After finishing the course, many went on tour to complete their studies, visiting Mithila (Darbhanga) to learn *darshana* or philosophy and law, and Benares for grammar, rhetoric and the Vedas. On returning home, many of them set up small *tols* in their own houses.

Well-to-do Musalmans sent promising boys to Madrasas, which were established at nearly all the head-quarters of the local Governors. These institutions date back to the beginning of Muhammadan rule in Bengal, for we find that Muhammad-i-Bakhtyar Khilji and his Amirs set up Madrasas at Lakhnauti, and in 1313 A. D. Zafar Khan built one at Tribeni. They were usually attached to some mosque and were often liberally endowed. The students had lodging and

boarding free, though contributions were frequently made by those whose parents were better off. The pupils were taught the Koran and Persian classics by maulvis, while special instruction was also given in the Hadis or Musalman law and in Arabic literature. In the old correspondence reference is made to several such institutions. For instance, in September 1818 we find the Collector reporting concerning a religious institution and school at which 5 or 6 scholars were entertained, the cost being met by a pension of Rs. 6 a year granted by Government to the principal. In 1819 there is a reference to a Madrasa attached to a mosque, possibly that at Bohar, and in July 1823 the Board reported an endowment for a college in Burdwan of 254 sicca rupees per annum.

No special arrangements appear to have been made for female education. Hindu girls of tender age often attended *pathshalas* but few were permitted to go there after seven or eight years of age. The Muhammadans were stricter and apparently did not permit them to go to any *maktab*, but many of the more affluent allowed their girls to be taught at home. Among the Kayesths and Brahmans, a few managed to learn Bengali or Sanskrit at home. The Vaishnavas were more liberal-minded, allowing girls, and even elderly ladies, to read and write; indeed, there were several poetesses among them.

PROGRESS OF MODERN EDUCATION

The first attempt to improve on this system of education was made in 1816 when Captain Stewart, a servant of the East India Company, established two vernacular schools in the district, in connection with the Church Missionary Society. In two years the number of schools had increased to ten containing a thousand children and costing Rs. 240 a month. Captain Stewart at first encountered considerable opposition, and the Brahman school masters, who saw their occupation threatened, circulated rumours that he designed to kidnap all the children and send them to England. One instance even is said to have occurred, in which a father

exposed his child to prevent the possibility of his being educated by Captain Stewart. The introduction of printed books also caused some alarm. Formerly nothing but manuscripts had been used and it was remarked of the village school masters : "If you put a printed book in their hands they are unable to read it without great difficulty and are still less able to understand its contents." Besides the rudiments of Geography, Astronomy, and History Captain Stewart caused instruction to be given in some few of the preambles of the East India Company's regulations with the object of instructing the people in the benevolent intentions of the Government. These schools became so celebrated that the Calcutta Society sent its Superintendent for five months to Burdwan in 1819 to learn Captain Stewart's system, as it was found that he educated a greater number of children with fewer teachers and at half the cost of the old system and when Mr. Adam made his enquiry into the state of education in 1837, he reported that Burdwan was the best educated district in Bengal. The educational work of the mission continued to prosper. Under the Revd. J. J. Weitbrecht (1830-1852) the Mission managed 14 schools scattered over an area of 40 miles with an attendance of a thousand Boys, a girls' school, and one of the first High schools in Bengal with a hostel for Hindu students attached to it. Of these schools four in Burdwan were supported by the subscriptions of the European residents in the station, who contributed Rs. 60 a month for this purpose. Besides the vernacular schools maintained at and near Burdwan elementary schools had also been opened before 1834 at Kalna and Katwa, the latter being managed by the Baptist Missionary Society.

STATE OF EDUCATION IN 1837

In his third report on the state of education in Bengal Mr. Adam gives a detailed description of the schools and colleges then existing in the district. There were in all 629 Bengali elementary schools, one village containing as many as seven, and seventy-nine containing two or more. Of these schools nine were supported by the Missions and one by the Raja

of Burdwan. The teachers were mostly Kayesths, Brahmans, Sadgops or Aguris by caste, and many of them eked out their professional income by engaging in farming, money-lending, trade, weaving or service. The total number of scholars was found to be 13,190 of whom 13 were Christians, and 769 Muhammadans, and the average period passed at school was estimated at about 11 years. They were drawn from all classes and castes, but in the Mission schools a far larger proportion of low caste boys were taught. In addition to these elementary schools there were 190 Sanskrit schools with 1,358 students. The subjects commonly taught in these were Grammar, Lexicology, Literature, Law, Logic, Medicine and Mythology. And besides these there were 93 Persian and 8 Arabic schools, of which two were supported by the Maharaja of Burdwan. There were also four girls' schools at Burdwan, Katwa, and Kalna. All the schools were managed by Missionaries, and the number of girls taught in them was 175, of whom 36 were Christians, and one a Muhammadan. The standard of instruction given in most of the elementary schools can be judged from the fact that out of the total number of scholars no less than 7,113 had not advanced beyond writing on the ground, and only 2,610 had learnt to write on paper.

STATE OF EDUCATION IN 1868

In the next thirty years a great advance was made and by 1868 ten aided and two unaided High schools, and twenty-two Middle English schools had been established. The Church Missionary Society, besides its High school and hostel at Burdwan, which was in a flourishing condition, had opened a High school at Memari, and another had been established by the Free Church of Scotland Mission at Kalna. In these three schools alone the number of boys taught was 518. In addition the High school maintained by the Maharaja of Burdwan, which had been established as an Anglo-Vernacular school in 1817, had increased largely and at that time was attended by 500 pupils. Another High school known as the Burdwan Preparatory School had been started in the town and was doing well. A free High English school

had been established at Chakdighi by the trustees of the will of the late Babu Sarada Prasad Singh Rai, and aided High English schools, under native management, had been started at Katwa, Kulingram, Okersha, Belgona, Bagnapara, and Badla. Besides these Government Middle Vernacular schools had been established at Amadpur, Barakar, and Galsi. Two schools for European and Eurasian children, the first in the district, had also been opened in 1866-67.

FEMALE EDUCATION

The first school for girls was started by the European ladies at Burdwan in connection with the Ladies' Society at Calcutta some time before 1834, and by 1837 there were altogether four girls' schools in the district. All these schools were under the management of the various Missionaries. The Ladies' Society of Calcutta supported those at Japat near Kalna and in Burdwan itself, and these schools were under the management of the Rev. Mr. Alexander. Another in the premises of the Church Missionary Society at Burdwan was supported and managed by the Rev. J. J. Weitbrecht, while the school at Katwa was managed by Rev. W. Cary and supported by the Calcutta Baptist Society for promoting native female education. In the schools supported by the Ladies' Society a sum of Re. 1-8 a month was allowed for providing refreshments for the children. And three female messengers were employed to bring the children to school and to take them home. If the messenger brought ten scholars a day for a month, she was paid Rs. 2, but it was not necessary that the same children should always be brought, and only the number was regarded. It is therefore hardly surprising to find Mr. Adam writing of the schools that the progress of the children was slow and their attendance irregular. The number of girls taught in these schools was 175 and the instruction was largely religious. Of this number 36 were Christians, and only 1 a Muhammadan, while Mr. Adam reports that out of the total number of scholars, 112 could read but could not write. In 1868 there were altogether 9 girls' schools and the Deputy Inspector reported that a desire for the education of girls was steadily progressing.

PRESENT STATE OF EDUCATION

If Burdwan is no longer the best educated district in Bengal it compares very favourably in this respect with the rest of the Province. Out of a total population of a little over one and-a-half millions, 130,000 persons, or one in every 12, were returned at the last census as literate, that is, they could read or write some language, while 16,658 or a little more than one in every 100 persons, could read and write English. This proportion is considerably larger than that returned for the Province as a whole. Of the persons who were returned as literate, males, as might be expected, predominate enormously, the percentage of literates among them being 16.2 as compared with the provincial average of 10.4; while among females 8 out of every thousand were literate—a proportion which is the average for the division and is considerably higher than that returned for most districts. In respect of English education, also, the district stands high. Approximately 1 man in every 50 and 1 woman in every thousand were able to read and write English—a figure which is exceeded only by the metropolitan districts, that is Hooghly, Howrah, and the 24-Parganas. It is only the higher castes such as Baidyas, who to judge by the census returns are much the best educated caste, Kayesths and Brahmans who have any knowledge of English. Among the lower castes who form the great bulk of the population there are practically none who have any acquaintance with it.

It is difficult to estimate with any accuracy the progress in education, owing to a change in the system of recording the census. On former occasions the population was divided into literate, learning and illiterate, but in the census of 1901, the only distinction made was between the literate and illiterate. It is certain that a good many persons who would have been entered as "learning" under the old rule have in the last census been shewn as illiterate, and it is therefore impossible to base any accurate estimate of the advance in education on a comparison of the returns. A rough approximation can however be arrived at by taking all persons over 15 years of age who were entered as "learning"

in 1891 as "literate". The results obtained for the district show that in 1891, 19 per cent among males over 15 years of age were literate and five per thousand among females. The corresponding figures for 1901 were 20 per cent among males and 10 per mille among females. There are now in the district no less than 1,470 schools of which 1,457 with 53,483 pupils are public institutions, and 13 with 330 pupils are private institutions. Of the former 26 schools, attended by 1,138 pupils, are under public management, 16 being managed by Government and 10 by the District or Municipal Board ; while 1,431 schools, attended by 52,344 pupils, are under private management, 1,207 being aided and 225 unaided. The number of boys at school as compared with the number of boys of school-going age, is steadily increasing and is now 46,718 out of a total of 114,711, which represents a percentage of 40.7, the district in this respect standing tenth among the districts in the Province. The inspecting staff consists of one Deputy Inspector of Schools, 3 Additional Deputy Inspectors of Schools, 9 Sub-Inspectors of Schools, 3 Assistant Sub-Inspectors of Schools and 16 Inspecting Pandits.

COLLEGIATE EDUCATION

The only college in the district is that maintained by the Burdwan Raj in the town of Burdwan. This institution, which is entirely maintained by the Maharaja, was founded in 1817 as an English Vernacular school. In 1868, by which time it had become a High school, there were 500 boys on the rolls, and in 1881 it was finally recognized as a second grade college. The number of pupils on the rolls has of late years steadily declined and in 1909 was only 53 as compared with 203 in 1904. The principal causes of the decrease are reported to be the establishment of the Wesleyan Mission College at Bankura and the recent imposition of tuition fees. Twenty-five boys were sent up for the F. A. examination of 1908, of whom 14 passed, one passing in the 1st division and nine in the 2nd. At the supplementary F. A. examination of the same year 5 students passed, of

whom 1 stood first and another seventh in order of merit. The returns for 1907-08 shew that the total receipts from fees amounted to Rs. 2,287, and from endowments to Rs. 7,232, the total expenditure being Rs. 9,500 which represents an average of Rs. 144 for each student a year. Attached to the college is a collegiate school also maintained by the Raj. The number of pupils on the roll in 1909 was 258 including 12 Muhammadans. The Raj also maintains a High school at Kalna.

SECONDARY EDUCATION

The number of secondary schools in the district is 135 including one for girls with an attendance of 11,639 boys and 69 girls. Of these schools 28 are High schools, of which 17 were aided and 11 unaided. There are 3 High schools at Burdwan—the Burdwan Municipal School which is supported by the Municipality with a grant-in-aid, the Burdwan Raj Collegiate School, the cost of which is entirely borne by the Raj, and the Burdwan Albert Victor School, which is the largest in the district, having 394 boys.

The following statement gives the high schools during the year 1909-10 :

<u>Aided schools</u>	<u>Unaided schools</u>
1. Burdwan Municipal	1. Burdwan Raj Collegiate
2. Bhaila	2. Burdwan Albert Victor
3. Memari	3. Gopalpur
4. Nasigram	4. Sankari
5. Mankur	5. Torkona
6. Raina	6. Chakdighi
7. Badla	7. Kalna Raj
8. Bagnapara	8. Putsuri
9. Patuli	9. Mathrun
10. Purbasthali	10. Ukhra
11. Katwa	11. Ethora
12. Dainhat	12. Siarsol
13. Okersha	
14. Raniganj	
15. Asansol Railway	
16. Sanktoria (Desergarh)	

Besides the High schools there are altogether 85 Middle English schools in the district, of which 4 are under the direct management of the District Board, 61 are aided and 20 unaided. Of the 22 Middle Vernacular schools 4 are under the District Board, and 16 are aided. The number of pupils in the secondary schools is rising and in 1909 was 11,700 against 11,200 in the preceding year. Of this number 4,200 or 37 per cent belonged to the secondary stage. The total expenditure on the schools amounted to Rs. 1,79,000 of which Rs. 22,000 was derived from public funds and Rs. 1,56,000 from private sources. Of the expenditure, Rs. 44,000 or more than one-fourth was in the Primary department, Rs. 2,000 being derived from Government, Rs. 3,000 from the District Funds, Rs. 22,000 from fees, and Rs. 21,000 from private sources. During the same year the total contribution from Provincial revenues for secondary education amounted to Rs. 8,000, and the total receipts from fees to Rs. 93,000. The annual average cost of educating a boy in a High school, Middle English school, and a Middle Vernacular school was Rs. 20, Rs. 11 and Rs. 12 respectively.

PRIMARY EDUCATION

The number of boys' Primary schools in the district is 1,138, of which 221 are Upper Primary and 917 Lower Primary schools. Of these, 8 schools attached to the 8 Guru Training schools are managed by Government and one by the Municipal Board. The rest are under private management, 972 being aided and 157 unaided. Of the aided schools there are 8 colliery *pathshalas* in the Asansol subdivision, which in 1908-09 received grants from an assignment of Rs. 800 made by Government for the education of the miners' children, 4 schools were aided from the receipts from Government estates, 28 were aided by the various Municipalities, and 721 by the District Board. The number of pupils attending the schools during the year 1908-09 was 36,000 of whom 9,000 were in the Upper Primary schools. The Gurus in charge of the schools are now paid a small subsistence allowance and a further allowance at the end

of the year, which is only given if their schools satisfactorily pass the tests imposed by Government. The total expenditure for 1908-09 on Primary schools was Rs. 88,249, and the average annual cost of an Upper Primary school was Rs. 135-8 and of a Lower Primary school Rs. 63-8. Most of the Primary schools are badly equipped with furniture and teaching appliances, the only equipment prescribed by the District Board for an Upper Primary school being a school house, 3 wall maps (the World, Bengal and the District), a black board and a chair or stool. And at least ninety per cent of the Lower Primary schools possess no school house, a private house or a shed attached to some temple being generally used for that purpose. In 1906-07 Government placed a grant of Rs. 1,600 at the disposal of the District Board for the construction of buildings for the Primary schools, but it was found impossible to raise a sufficient amount by local subscription and no buildings have as yet been erected.

GIRLS' SCHOOLS

In 1908-09 there were 76 girls' schools in the district of which 7 received grants-in-aid from Government, 59 were aided by the District Board and 3 by the Municipalities, and 7 were unaided. Two Model Girls' schools have been opened by Government at Paraj and Amadpur, which are now under the control of the Education Department, and all the other schools receiving Government aid are under the management of Missionaries. Excluding boys the total number of pupils under instruction in the girls' schools in 1908-09 was 1,998, of whom 7 belonged to Middle English schools, 71 to Middle Vernacular schools, 175 to Upper and 1,754 to Lower Primary schools. The only secondary girls' school in the district is the Asansol Mission Girls' Middle Vernacular school, which was formerly a Middle English school but has recently been reduced. The expenditure on secondary and primary schools for girls amounted in the same year to Rs. 13,000 as compared with Rs. 11,500 in the preceding year. Of this sum Rs. 1,800

was contributed by Provincial revenues and Rs. 1,900 and Rs. 330 by the District Board and the Municipalities, respectively. Fees are charged in very few of the schools and the receipts from this head only amounted to Rs. 142. Female teachers are employed in the schools under Missionary management and in that maintained by the Burdwan Raj at Burdwan, but generally speaking almost all the girls' schools are taught by male teachers who are drawn from some boys' school in the locality. Most of the schools send up their pupils for the examinations conducted by the Uttarpara Hitakari Sabha.

EUROPEAN SCHOOLS

There are three schools for Europeans in the district. There are the Railway school at Asansol for boys and girls, and the St. Patrick's boarding school for boys and the Loretto Convent school for girls which are maintained at Asansol by the Roman Catholic Mission. The Railway school is maintained by the East Indian Railway Company and is aided by Government. The other schools are unaided.

TECHNICAL SCHOOLS

There are two technical schools in the district—the Burdwan Technical School at Burdwan, which is managed by the District Board, and the Kharsoli Industrial School, attached to the Wesleyan Mission at Raniganj. The Technical school at Burdwan was started sixteen years ago. It is at present divided into an apprentice department and an artizan class. In the apprentice department the course of training corresponds exactly to that in the first and second years' apprentice classes of the Shibpur Engineering College, and after two years' training the pupils are sent up for the Sub-Overseer's examination of that College held under the Joint Technical Examination Board. In the artizan class practical carpentry and blacksmith's work is taught. No fees are charged in this class and the Burdwan Raj provides 3 scholarships, each of the value of Rs. 36 a year, tenable for two years, for artizans under training. There were 61 pupils

on the rolls in 1908-09 and the total expenditure in the same year amounted to Rs. 4,600, of which Rs. 2,800 was contributed by the District Board, Rs. 240 by the Municipality, and Rs. 60 by the District Board of the 24-Parganas, while the income from fees amounted to Rs. 1,200. The Kharsoli Industrial school is attached to the Wesleyan Mission at Raniganj and was founded in 1897. Lower primary education and a training in simple carpentry is given to the pupils, who are all boarders in the Mission orphanage.

SPECIAL SCHOOLS

There are 78 *maktabs* and Koran schools in the district with 2,566 and 265 pupils attending them. Of the Koran schools the Raigram Madrasa receives Rs. 48 a year out of a special grant of Rs. 400 sanctioned by Government for the encouragement of Muhammadan education in the district, and 62 *maktabs* are aided from public funds, receiving in all Rs. 1,680 from the District Board, Rs. 142 from the Municipalities and Rs. 300 from Provincial revenue. There are also 13 unaided indigenous schools which have not accepted the standards of the Education Department, including *tols*, *maktabs*, and Koran schools with 330 pupils.

There are 43 night schools, *i.e.*, primary schools attended by adult labourers and cultivators in the evening after their day's work, which were attended by 836 pupils. For training *gurus* or primary school teachers there are 8 training schools with 8 practising schools attached to them, working on an upper primary basis. The number of pupils was 113. Ten hostels for male students and one for females are maintained, which are all under private management. There are also 8 lower primary schools specially intended for the children of Santals and other aboriginals.

MISCELLANEOUS

There are five public libraries in the district, the Burdwan Raj Public Library, the Kalna Mayo Library, the Katwa Shyam Lal Library and a public library at Raniganj. Of these the Burdwan Raj Library is the largest and most

important. It was established in 1881 and in 1908-09 was visited by 70,435 persons. It is entirely supported by the Maharaja. The Kalna Mayo Library is partially supported by the Municipality and those at Katwa and Raniganj are maintained entirely by public subscriptions. Four newspapers are published in the district, the Burdwan Sanjibani, the Pallibashi, the Ratnakar, and the Prosun and there are four public printing presses at Burdwan, two at Asansol and two at Raniganj. There are printing presses also at Katwa and Srikhando in the Katwa subdivision, and at Kalna.