TITLE : FROM *ANDARMAHAL* TO SCHOOLS : FEMALE EDUCATION IN EASTERN BENGAL IN THE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURIES

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DECLARATION

I declare that the dissertation titled 'From *Andarmahal* to Schools: Female Education in Eastern Bengal in the 19th and Early 20th Centuries', submitted to the University of Dhaka, Bangladesh, for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in History, is entirely my own original work. It was completed under the supervision of Dr. Sonia Nishat Amin (Professor, Department of History).

I further confirm that no part or whole of the dissertation has been submitted in any form to any other University or Institute for a degree or diploma.

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ABSTRACT

The *andarmahal* is the inner quarters of an affluent house-hold, where the women of the family live and work. Apart from being a dwelling place, it functioned as a repository of culture and tradition and in nineteenth century Bengal, it symbolized the one space that colonization had not penetrated yet. The British Raj came to view the *andarmahal* as the unreasonable, illogical space that resisted colonization and where the civilizing rhetoric of colonialism needed to find a foothold. By the second half of the nineteenth century, the *andarmahal*, or, interchangeably, the zenana or zenana mahal became the site where Christian missionaries began active proselytization as part of the civilizing mission. This was done through institutionalizing the age-old practice of home education which gained cognition as the zenana education system. By the early twentieth century, the colonial Government became involved in bringing the system under Government control until it was formally ended in 1933.

The early twentieth century saw other changes in institutional education for the girls of Eastern Bengal. The Partition of Bengal in 1905 gave a boost to the hitherto Calcutta-centric developments in the field of female education. The colonial rhetoric once again came into play with the formation of a Female Education Committee entrusted with the responsibility of recommending reform measures whereas no financial arrangements were made to implement them. With the annulment of Partition (1911), Eastern Bengal ceased to enjoy the administrative attention it had gained in 1905.

It is within the cultural, social and political context of tradition versus modernity, patriarchal control versus colonial intervention that this study analyses the process of the rise of female education in the neglected area of Eastern Bengal. It challenges the cliché that British colonial rule was the driving force behind the spread of female education in this region. Through the grant-in-aid system, Government aided the schools that were built through local initiative, however inadequate that grant may be, and provided guidelines for the content of education. Control was maintained over the school management bodies through the various rules for receiving aid. This study narrates how, despite perennial financial, social, cultural and religious restraints in the agrarian hinterland that Eastern Bengal was, elementary female education steadily progressed through the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

B.S.	Bangla Sal (Bengali Year)
CMS	Church Missionary Society
FEC	Female Education Committee
GEBA	Government of East Bengal and Assam
GOB	Government of Bengal
LMS	London Missionary Society
NA,B	National Archives, Bangladesh
NAID	National Archives of India, Delhi
WBSA	West Bengal State Archives

Introduction

The passing of traditional society into modernity is characterized, as Daniel Lerner explains, by the dynamic interplay of the three vital components of physical, social and psychic mobility.[1] The discourse on colonial modernity in Bengal begins with the psychological premises of the intelligentsia's uneasiness regarding modernization and its troubled relationship with tradition. This was viewed as a dilemma between loss of Bengali cultural identity.[2] In the case of Eastern Bengal, the matter was further complicated by the question of the Muslim identity that had been constructed during the long period of Muslim rule prior to the British colonial encounter.[3] The hegemonic dominance of the traditional psyche as opposed to the push for modernization along western lines, is the subject of an ever-growing historiography on Bengal in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. A large portion of this is dedicated to the study of change in the ideology and reality of woman's status in the private space and the public domain of the forum, the marketplace and the academy as negotiation went on to replace traditional cultural norms with new ways and beliefs. In the rapidly changing socio-economic and political environment of the nineteenth century the old and the newly forged ideologies came into conflict in the *andarmahal*, or inner quarters of the household, the domestic space inhabited by women, on the question of women's emancipation through education.

The *andarmahal*, apart from being the dwelling place of the women, was the repository of culture and tradition and it symbolized the one space that colonization had not penetrated. The British Raj came to view the *andarmahal* or, interchangeably, *zenana* or *zenana mahal* as the unreasonable, illogical space that resisted colonization and where the civilizing rhetoric of colonialism needed to find a foothold. By the second half of the nineteenth century, Kumkum Sangari argues in *Politics of the Possible: Essays on Gender History*, the domestic sphere had become not just an instrumental and expedient site in the colonial venture, but also domestic

[1] Lerner, Daniel, *The Passing of Traditional Society* (New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1964), cited in Kopf, David, *British Orientalism and the Bengal Renaissance: The Dynamics of Indian Modernization, 1773-1835* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), p. 4.

[2] David Kopf attributes this confusion to the intellectual eclecticism of Hindu tradition, Sufi mysticism, Utilitarian rationalism, Enlightenment philosophies and western cultural influences. See Kopf, *British Orientalism and the Bengal Renaissance* for details.

[3] For discussions on the formation of the Muslim identity, see Ahmed, Sufia, *Muslim Community in Bengal, 1884-1912* (Dhaka: University Press Limited, 2nd edition, 1996) and Ahmed, Rafiuddin (ed.), *Understanding the Bengal Muslims: Interpretative Essays* (Dhaka: The University Press Limited, 2001).

ideologies had become a political field where issues of class, caste and religious divisions came to be reconfigured and redefined.[4] During that process, the sharply defined traditional boundaries of the private and public spheres shifted to allow the movement of the private form of patriarchy into a form that may best be described as public patriarchy.[5]

It is thus within the cultural, social and political context of tradition versus modernity; patriarchal control versus colonial intervention that the Woman's Question in Eastern Bengal in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries must be viewed. Eastern Bengal was an agricultural society with a Muslim majority steeped in both Hindu and Muslim cultural traditions. Dacca (now spelled Dhaka) was the principal provincial town. The *East Bengal District Gazetteers, Dacca*[6] describe the class division as comprising of: great landlords, professional classes, traders, agriculturists, artisans, weavers and boating and laboring classes. Some remnants of the Turko-Afghan Mughal ruling classes remained as the *ashraf* or elites. A new middle class had begun to rise in the second half of the nineteenth century.[7] Broadly speaking, it is the girls and women of the elite and the middle class we shall be primarily focusing on in this study. The first educational institution for girls in the region had been founded in Dacca in 1825 by the Protestant Baptist missionaries. All the girls' schools opened by the missionaries closed after four years when the founder Mrs. Leonard had to leave. The next attempts at establishing schools were taken by the Dacca Brahmos. The earliest that we have been able to trace so far is the Bangla Bazar School that opened in 1856.[8] The famous Eden Female School founded in 1878 began its journey as an Adult School founded again by the Dacca Brahmos in 1873. Even with such early attempts at institutional female education, the 1911 census showed that out of every thousand females in Eastern Bengal, 990 could neither read nor write and only 8.2 per cent of Hindu girls in Dacca city were literate.[9]

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[4] Sangari, Kumkum, *Politics of the Possible: Essays on Gender History, Narratives* (New Delhi: Tulika, 1999, reprinted in 2001), p. 185.
[5] See Amin, Sonia Nishat, *The World of Muslim Women in Colonial Bengal, 1876-1939* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996) for details.
[6] B.C. Allen, *East Bengal District Gazetteers, Dacca* (Allahabad, 1912), p. 82.
[7] See Murshid, Tazeen M., *The Sacred and the Secular: Bengali Muslim Discourses, 1871-1977* (Dhaka: University Press Limited, 1996.
[8] Reported in the newspaper *Dacca News* of 5th July, 1856, cited in Ahmed, Sharif Uddin, *Dhaka: A Study in Urban Iistory and Development, 1840-1921* (first published: London: Curzon Press Ltd., 1986), p. 73.
[9] Ibid., p. 161.

Surveys on the history of education in Asia, Europe and America allow researchers to make two generalizations: (a) women are almost universally educationally disadvantaged in comparison with men, and, (b) education was, for those few women able to obtain it, distinctly a class privilege.

Historically, education has served a utilitarian purpose by training persons in the specific skills needed by a given society. Such education was, for millennia, family-based in the form of apprenticeship. Household based education was informal, utilitarian and individualized; it was non-literate and offered in the vernacular. Mothers educated daughters and female servants; fathers educated sons and male servants. Apart from the few exceptions girls were disadvantaged in every known society of the Western world as well, in regard to the length of their training, the content they were taught and the skills of their teachers. This followed logically from the purposes of education. Since women were excluded from military, religious, bureaucratic and political functions, they were considered to have little need for formalized learning. On the other hand, daughters of the elites, such as princesses and noble women who might have to serve as stand-ins for sons or husbands, were as carefully tutored and trained as their brothers. During the Middle Ages the content of their learning was the same and they often shared tutors with their brothers. Education was a class privilege for both sexes and served kin and state interests. It is not surprising therefore to find that almost all the known educated women from Antiquity to the 16th century C.E. were members of the nobility. In India in the pre-Mughal era princesses have been known to have acquired a knowledge of letters. Razia Sultan was lettered. Sultan Giasuddin Balban appointed female teachers for the ladies of the harem. Among Mughal princesses and consorts, Nurjahan, Humayun's sister Gulbadan Begum before her, and Jahangir and Shahjahan's daughters – were all well versed in Persian and used to write poetry.

In the nineteenth century, to take education to the women who were not members of the nobility, an ideological basis had to be developed. According to Sir Philip Hartog who was the Chairman of the Auxiliary Committee on Education in 1929:

> "The education of the girls is the education of the mother and through her, all her children. The middle and high classes of India have long suffered from the dualism of an educated manhood

> and an ignorant womanhood --- a dualism that lowers the whole level of home and domestic life and has its reactions on personal and national character."[10]

It was after the right to education had been settled in favor of women by the second half of the nineteenth century that the content of education became a polemical issue. The innate differences between the sexes led many thinkers to call for separate educational philosophies for boys and girls. An influential figure was Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) whose thoughts on education were extolled in the five books of his educational tract *Emile*. Boys, according to Rousseau, were to be educated to become rational, moral and self-governing individuals, whereas girls were to be trained for domestic submission and acquisition of the skills required to fulfill their future role as wife and mother.[11] Thus separate curricula for boys and girls continued to be prepared during the colonial period. The matter of curricula thus illustrated the fact that society attached greater importance to men's achievement. It also reinforced the differences between men's and women's lives. It was painfully evident that education did not necessarily hold for women the advantages it held for men and the paucity of scholarship awards reflected in part the administrators' ambivalence toward financial aid. Financing female education was evidently more difficult than financing boys' education. Raising money was difficult because fund givers were not convinced of the value of female education. The newly established schools could not afford to be generous with their limited funds. But limited funds did not deter the tide of education that rode the waves of nineteenth century reformism and continued unabated until the women of Bengal crossed the threshold of primary, middle and high schools to step into the arena of tertiary education. This is a study that narrates that process in Eastern Bengal.

The regional location of the eastern portion as the agrarian hinterland of Bengal caused social historians to take up Kolkata-centric studies, neglecting a large part of the Bengal region's rich and varied history. To knowledge, no extensive study of the spread of female education in this region has been undertaken prior to this work. Even Adam's reports on education, which by far were the most extensive survey on education during colonial times, referred to western and

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[10] Government of Bengal, Ninth Quinquennial Review on the Progress of Education for the years 1932-37, by A.K. Chanda, I.E.S., Superintendent, Government Printing, Bengal Government Press, Alipore, Bengal, 1939, West Bengal State Archives.

[11] See Eccleshall, Robert, Geoghegan, Vincent, Jay, Richard et.al. (eds.), *Political Ideologies: And Introduction* (London: Routledge, 1984), p. 261.

northern Bengal only, ignoring the eastern part of Bengal.[12] Academicians who have taken present day Bangladesh as their area of study have treated female education as only a small section in their broader interest in other areas of political and socio-cultural development. No detailed investigation of the nature of the zenana education system has been made so far. The zenana education system played a significant role in molding the future of generations of women to come in that the zenana-educated women were most instrumental in sending their daughters to formal institutions and delaying the marriage of the same. The resources of the National Archives of Bangladesh that help to reconstruct the history of these forerunners of today's emancipated woman have so far escaped the notice of scholars. Thus first and foremost, the present survey addresses this lacuna and hopes to fill an important void in the historiography of the social history of present day Bangladesh.

The question is, however, was it the British Government, as is the general idea, the catalyst in spreading female education in Bengal? Or was it, on the contrary, for the most part a local initiative? What was the extent of the Christian missionary impact on the women's education movement in Eastern Bengal? In the context of the social organization and the political configuration of the two communities of Hindus and Muslims, what impact did the Partition of Bengal (1905) have on the eastern part? How far does statistical data support the hypothesis that the women's education movement was an indigenous effort? This study seriously challenges the established notion that it was British colonial effort that was most significant in establishing formal female education in Eastern Bengal.

Literature Survey:

The earliest authors to write authoritative treatises about the women of Bengal were Margaret M. Urquhart (London, 1925) and G.M. Chiplunkar (Poona,1930). Reprinted in Delhi by Cultural Publishing House in 1983, Urquhart's book titled *Women of Bengal* gives an insight into a white woman's perception of the other. The book, however, does not deal with education as such. G.M. Chiplunkar's book titled *The Scientific Basis of Women's Education*, published by S.B. Hudlikar,

[12] Shahidullah, Kazi, *Patshalas into Schools: The Development of Indigenous Elementary Education in Bengal, 1854-1905* (Calcutta: Firma KLM Private Limited, 1987), p. 6.

Poona, makes a scathing criticism of the idea of giving girls the same education as boys. The same curriculum as boys, Chiplunkar opines, will make girls "asexual, restless and discontent."[13] The author thought that the Indian universities should open diploma courses in Domestic Science and Home Economics otherwise "the prospective wifehood and motherhood of the nation is likely to be endangered."[14] The author does not deal with the curriculum of elementary education which is being investigated in the present study.

Jogesh Chandra Bagal was the pioneer in the uncharted field of women's education in Eastern Bengal. His *Women's Education in Eastern India*, published in Calcutta in 1956 was a milestone. This invaluable book, unfortunately could not be located for consultation after a prolonged search in the National Library, Alipore, Kolkata, where it was previously held. In another book titled *Women's Education in India: The First Phase*, published in the same year (1956) in Calcutta Bagal had painstakingly recorded the efforts of the missionaries and listed the names of the schools they established. We get important information here about what the missionaries were attempting in different parts of Eastern Bengal. Another book charting missionary activities in Bengal is Sunil Kumar Chatterjee's *Hannah Marshman, the First Woman Missionary in India*, published from Calcutta by S.K. Poddar in 1987. This book also records information about the first schools set up by missionaries in Dacca and Chittagong. The two volumes of the life and times of the famous Serampore trio William Carey, Joshua Marshman and William Ward compiled by Marshman's son John Clark Marshman is a lasting testament to the sacrifices missionaries made for their Faith. Published and reprinted in London by the Council of Serampore College in 2005, J.C. Marshman's two volumes of *The Life and Times of Carey, Marshman, And Ward: Embracing the History of the Serampore Mission* is housed in the Serampore Missionary Archives in Serampore, West Bengal. In volume 1 the author describes Mr. Marshman's first and second journey to Jessore in Eastern Bengal. Incidentally, zenana education in Eastern Bengal had begun from Jessore in 1841, but the book does not mention whether Marshman inspected the work of the zenana classes. An excellent book on women's education in the pre-colonial era is Narendra Nath Law's *Promotion of Learning in India During Mohammedan Rule*. Published in Delhi (IAD Oriental Series 14, Idarah-I Adabiyat-I, 1973), it catalogues the names of educated women of the elite class in the

[13] Chiplunkar, G.M., *The Scientific Basis of Women's Education*, (Poona:S.B. Hudlikar, 1930), p. 254.
[14] Ibid.

pre-colonial era, what they were taught, how they were taught, and how their study was financed. Although there is no mention in the book about Bengal, it helps, nonetheless, to show that education among women was not a novel idea imported to India by the British.

As in the early historiography, in the recently growing historiography of women, the changes in the lives of the women of Eastern Bengal went largely unnoticed. The pioneering work in women's history in Bangladesh, the erstwhile Eastern Bengal, is Ghulam Murshid's *The Reluctante Debutante: Response of Bengali Women to Modernization, 1849-1905* published by Sahitya Samsad, Rajshahi, in 1983. Murshid documents, "how a section of English educated Bengali men exposed their women to the process of modernization during the late nineteenth century and how women responded to these male efforts." [15] Murshid's work is highly informative, but does not delve much into the developments in Eastern Bengal. The period of his study ends in 1905 which was the year Dacca was made the capital of the new province of Eastern Bengal and Assam and Government took an unprecedented interest in finding ways to improve the condition of female education in this region.

Working with the same time frame as Murshid, Meredith Borthwick, in her book titled *The Changing Role of Women in Bengal: 1849-1905*, published in 1984 from the Princeton University Press, New Jersey, reassesses the emancipation of women from the perspective of women themselves. She constructs the image of the middle class woman on the basis of contemporary journals edited by women and describes their changing role using other valuable data, viz., contemporary periodicals, memoirs, tracts, etc. She narrates how women crossed the threshold of the home to engage in public activity without radically departing from their roles in the family. Borthwick also looks into the phenomenon of how home education was institutionalized. This valuable study takes a Calcutta-centric approach which becomes a problem for readers interested in Eastern Bengal. The gap created by the previous two studies was filled by a seminal work done by Sonia Nishat Amin. Muslim women of Bengal have been studied in her book *The World of Muslim Women in Colonial Bengal, 1876-1939* and published by E.J. Brill of Leiden in 1996. The emergence of the Muslim gentlewoman or *bhadramahila* was examined in the three domains of family, education and literary activity. In the context of

[15] Murshid, Ghulam, *The Reluctante Debutante: Response of Bengali Women to Modernization, 1849-1905* (Rajshahi: Sahitya Samsad, 1983), Preface.

the social construction of a Bengal Muslim identity, the author studies the growth of an indigenous mode termed "Bengalicization." But by the author's own admission, much happened outside Calcutta, in the small towns of Eastern Bengal which were outside the purview of her study. What all three of these studies have in common apart from the obvious subject of the women of Bengal, was their liberal use of unconventional sources like women's journals, autobiographies, fiction and non-fiction written by women. The present study aims to address the area not delved into by these authors, viz., education of women in Eastern Bengal.

An important part of the present study is the zenana education system institutionalized by the Christian missionaries of the Roman Catholic Church and various Protestant denominations. Binoy Bhusan Roy and Pranati Ray have written a pioneering book about the missionaries' role in the education of the women of Bengal. The book contains extensive information on all aspects of zenana education with only sporadic mention of the system in Eastern Bengal. A good scholarly treatment of the missionaries was done by Krishna Lahiri where she looks at the interaction of women missionaries with the inmates of the zenana. Titled 'Education of Women in Bengal, 1849-1882, With Special Reference to Missionary Contributions', available at University Microfilm International (Michigan: Ann Arbor, 1985), it is a highly interesting work as it looks at how the women from two cultures impacted on each other, how it was not just a one way process where only the Indian women were being influenced by the alien culture of the Christian missionaries. This study also, while talking about Bengal, completely overlooks the uniqueness of Eastern Bengal. The period of Lahiri's work is limiting for the present work as it ends in 1882, whereas exciting changes were happening after that period. Other than Krishna Lahiri, Binoy Bhusan Roy and Praniti Ray, no other scholar has researched about zenana education.

Zoya Hasan and Ritu Menon's book *Educating Muslim Girls: A Comparative Study of Five Indian Cities* (New Delhi: Woman Unlimited, 2005) is an important addition in this trajectory that makes a comparative study of the rise and progress of the education of Muslim girls in the cities of Delhi, Aligarh, Hyderabad, Calicut and Calcutta. Dacca could have been included if only because the study was based on the progress among Muslim girls and Dacca was the capital of the province where the majority of the Muslim population in Bengal resided. The authors can argue that the main thrust of the monograph is on cities in post-independence India,

but their time-frame includes colonial India and in colonial India, the development of education of Muslim girls in Calcutta really does not represent the Muslim population, as, demographically speaking, Muslims were a minority in Calcutta and the development of the minority section of the population was not what the book was about.

Bharati Ray contributes immensely to the understanding of public opinion through the vernacular press through her edited book *Shekaler Narishiksha: Bamabodhini Patrika* [Women's education in Yester Years: The *Bamabodhini* Journal], published by the Women's Studies Research Centre of Calcutta University in 1994. The collection of pieces the famous *Bamabodhini* had printed about female education since the periodical began its auspicious journey in 1863 throws light on what women themselves were thinking on the subject. Although Eastern Bengali women's writings are not available there, East and West Bengal shared a common cultural and historical heritage which made the social and political dynamics of the two regions similar to each other. The issues that were raised in women's writings in the *Bamabodhini Patrika* reflect fully the sentiments of Eastern Bengal. The compilation of news articles from nineteenth century journals, periodicals and newspapers by Swapan Basu similarly throws light on contemporary public opinion expressed through the vernacular press. West Bengal Bangla Academy published Swapan Basu's large edited volume titled *Sambad-Samayikpatre Unish Shataker Bangalisamaj:* Vol. II [A Selection of News and Articles from 19th Century Journals] in 2003. In the news articles that are compiled in Basu's volume we find sporadic mentions of news items about Eastern Bengal which are very interesting complimentary additions to news from the *Bamabodhini Patrika.*

Muntassir Mamoon has contributed immensely to the historiography on Eastern Bengal in the nineteenth century. His *Unish Shatake Purbo Banglar Samaj* [The Society of Eastern Bengal in the Nineteenth Century] provides information about what the Brahmos of Eastern Bengal achieved in Mymensingh and Dacca in the last forty years of the nineteenth century. Published by Samay Prokashani (Dhaka) in 2004 and 2006 respectively, the two books *Unish Shatake Dhakar Mudran O Prakashani* [Print and Publications of Dacca in the Nineteenth Century] and *Unish Shatake Purbo Banger Mudran O Prokashani* [Print and Publications of East Bengal in the Nineteenth Century] carry the names of primers for girls' formal schools and zenana schools.

Among the recent scholarship (that has grown in Bangladesh in particular), we find Ph.D. theses dealing with women's education as part of larger studies on the socio-political advances made by women. We can cite here Mir Zaheda Nazneen's unpublished dissertation that looks at the trends of women's development from 1947 to 1995 and Arifa Sultana's unpublished dissertation that looks at education as a stepping stone for women's participation in politics. Abdullah Al-Masum has included a chapter on women's education in his book on the spread of modern education in Bengali Muslim society between the years 1885 and 1921 but that is again Calcutta-centric.

Hence, this present study hopes to fill a significant gap that exists in the historiography of women's development in Eastern Bengal.

Period of the Study:

We have not specified any dates for the beginning and the end of the study, instead, indicating broadly the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as the period of study. The whole nineteenth century was marked by gradual change in the social and cultural arena throughout Bengal (which included Eastern Bengal). The years that Eastern Bengal and Assam was administered as a separate province (1905-1911) have featured prominently in the study. Without specifically mentioning the date, we have not ventured beyond the year 1921. Nineteen twenty-one was an ostentatious year because female agency had indeed begun to manifest itself after a century of conflict and debate over how much public space could be or should be relinquished to women. The famous Eden Female School, after providing a high standard of education in the elementary and middle standards now crossed the threshold into women's tertiary education by opening a collegiate section for the first time in 1921. In 1921 history was created in the field of women's higher education when the University of Dacca started its journey and Leela Nag became the first woman to enter the University. Interestingly, Deshabandhu Chittaranjan Das' wife Basanti Debi (b.1880) became the President of the Bengal Provincial Congress in 1921.

This study deals with elementary education although it is not specified in the title because, as has been mentioned above, in Eastern Bengal tertiary education for women began

only with the opening of the collegiate section in Eden Female School in 1921 and the provision for the admission of girls at the newly established University of Dacca which also began operation in 1921. Before 1921, female education in Eastern Bengal had meant schooling at the primary level, middle level and only rarely at the high school level. Even the local teachers of the schools, as has been shown in Chapter 3, were mostly educated below the High School level. So, as a study of female education in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, focus on levels below the tertiary level is understandable. The developments at the tertiary level and its impact on Bangladeshi society would be very good subject matter for a future researcher.

Methodology and Sources:

In terms of epistemology, this study is purely an empirical enquiry into the status of the educational attainments of the women of Eastern Bengal irrespective of religious communities. The methodology followed is in the main that of traditional historiography viz., survey and analysis of textual sources (historical data). The sources were mainly gathered from the rich collection of the National Archives, Bangladesh. The resources of the West Bengal State Archives, Kolkata and the National Archives of India in Delhi have also been consulted. As material has been collected from different sources, in the Bibliography that has been attached at the end, we give the locations of the sources used, in third bracket.

The Bangiya Sahitya Parishad, Kolkata, the Bangla Academy, Dhaka and the Rare Section of the Central Library of the University of Dhaka have provided access to contemporary newspapers, journals and periodicals. Reports and reviews of the Education Department of the Government of Bengal and that of the Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, gazetteers, secretarial records official proceedings have been of primary importance for the nature of the study. These have been supplemented by contemporary newspapers and periodical journals. The records of the Assam Secretariat have been invaluable and have provided exclusive insight into the data prepared specifically for Eastern Bengal.

The present study comprises the geographical area that is now Bangladesh but was designated by the term Eastern Bengal in colonial records. The spelling of the names of some

districts has changed since colonial times (for example, Dacca is now spelled Dhaka). Some districts have new names altogether (a part of the Tipperah of colonial times is now Comilla, Backergunge is Barisal and the Surma Valley region is Sylhet). The names and spellings mentioned in the colonial documents have been used. The data that the Reports of Public Instruction provide give are disaggregated by community and give an overall view on female education in Bengal as a whole, thus severely restricting access to specific data about Eastern Bengal. Separating data for Eastern Bengal becomes quite impossible. In this regard, the voluminous literature and data produced by the various sub-committees of the Female Education Committee from locally verified sources make crucially important documents for charting the course of female education in the early 20th century. These invaluable documents in the holdings of the National Archives of Bangladesh have so far not been used appropriately.

Chapterization:

The subject of female education in Eastern Bengal has been divided into five chapters. The introduction defines the historical context of the subject of female education and reviews in short the related secondary sources. Chapter one titled 'Zenana Education: The Process of its Institutionalization' looks into the crucial part Christian missionary women played in taking western education right to the doorstep of the Bengali woman. They were the pioneers not only in establishing schools for Bengali girls, but also for institutionalizing the traditional method of home teaching which received the cognate of zenana education in colonial times. Zenana education was begun in the 1840s by a handful of missionary ladies in Jessore and Dacca. But by the end of the century, there were zenana education centers in almost all of the district towns of Eastern Bengal and also as deep into the interior as the Khasi Hills in the northern border of Sylhet. Christian missionary ladies of every denomination from the Roman Catholics to Scottish and Welsh Presbyterians to Protestants of all branches were involved in peripatetic teaching, that is, going from home to home, teaching the dwellers of the *andarmahal* or, interchangeably, the zenana (inner quarters of a household) English, needlework and the Catechisms. The local reaction to the program of proselytization in the *andarmahal* and Government actions to exercise

control over the Christian mission agencies has been discussed. Finally, the reasons behind the decline of this apparently popular mode of teaching are analyzed.

By the 1870s, local philanthropists and reformers were establishing formal educational institutions for girls on the western model following the early steps of Christian missionaries in this field. Chapter two titled 'Rise of Institutions for Women: From Indigenous Form to Western Model' documents the earliest of these attempts and tries to theoretically explain the ideological guidelines of reform and social change. The myth that the colonial Government was the driving force behind the spread of female education in Bengal is broken once we see that it was the locals who were establishing schools on their land and in their homesteads and donating money for the building of schools and providing funds for maintenance. The amount of the grant-in-aid extended by Government was so low compared to the required expenses that it didn't so much contribute to the school treasury as it did increase the authenticity of the school due to Government recognition. Female agencies in the establishment of the many institutions that are still extant today are shown here. In the search for the establishment of girls' schools in various districts, we have not come across a single school that was initially built by Government initiative.

Chapter three is titled 'The Partition Interlude: The Questionnaire and the Female Education Committee'. Here we take up the question of colonial efforts to extend female education during the short-lived partition of Bengal from 1905 to 1911. With Bengal divided and a new administrative unit at its disposal, the colonial Government turned to seek the support of the Muslims with heightened activity in economic and social advancements of which female education came to be a beneficiary. An opinion poll was conducted and a Female Education Committee was set up to recommend reforms which Government could consider for implementation. The FEC formed sub-committees to collect data about the status of female education in Eastern Bengal. The responses to the questionnaire which was circulated for the opinion poll, the data generated by the various sub-committees, on the one hand, presents deep insight into the actual condition of the ideal and the ground reality of female education in Eastern Bengal. On the other hand, the very limited success of the FEC explains the disparity between official colonial rhetoric and the practical implications of the implementation of policies.

Chapter four titled 'The Content of the New Education', deals with the curriculum that was formulated in the early twentieth century as Government came increasingly to place control over education and create a systematic duality where the indigenous systems of pathshalas and madrassah and zenana education ran alongside the Government aided primary, middle and English-medium high schools. The State's responsibility of building a skilled workforce with equal participation of women in the economy was a concept developed in the second half of the twentieth century. During colonial rule the guiding principle for women's education was to produce competent mothers, diligent housekeepers and companionate wives. Whatever class status or financial background a girl came from to the schools, her ultimate destination was the private domain of the domestic hearth. So the teaching of marketable skills was not required. The cultural representation of womanhood, to use Bharati Ray's phrase,[16] dictated that education be conducive to the future role a girl would be playing. Thus separate curricula for boys and girls were designed that amply reproduced the stark inequality of men and women in society. The separate curricula and primers developed for the zenana were, in 1907 adopted for use in the schools exclusively for Muslim girls. The content of that exclusively Muslim curriculum has also been discussed here.

The process of women's engagement with education has been as integrally linked with social factors as it was with financial ones. In Chapter five, 'Financing Female Education', we examine how education came to be transformed from a private enterprise into a joint venture of private and Government financing. Tables have been provided to show a comparison of central, provincial, municipal and private funding highlighting the different involvement of various branches of the Government. The costs of education administration including remuneration of teachers and staff have been discussed. We have shown how, despite being popular among the inmates of the *andarmahal*, the financial non-viability of zenana education contributed to its abolition. Thus the hitherto neglected area of funding for female education, particularly in Eastern Bengal, forms the closing backdrop to the study.

[16] Ray, Bharati (ed.), *From the Seams of History: Essays on Indian Women* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 2.

Chapter 1

Zenana Education: The Process of its Institutionalization

British colonial documents relating to female education in India during the nineteenth century use the term 'zenana education' in connection with a certain experiment in the method of female education. Zenana is the Persian word for woman. In Bengal, before the term *bhadramahila* caught on as the counterpart of the English gentlewoman[1], the term *zenana* was used to refer to the ladies of the upper echelon of society. In Eastern Bengal, the aristocratic classes consisted of Mughal, Afghan and Turkish stock.[2] The handful of Mughal, Afghan and Turkish nobility resided in Dhaka as representatives of the central Mughal government in Delhi. The Hindu ladies of the upper classes were also included in the term zenana, as were the ladies of the rising Hindu and Muslim middle classes by the end of the nineteenth century. The domestic space these women occupied or, the women's quarters, was called the *zenana mahal* or, alternatively, the *antahpur*. The several generations of women who lived in that secluded space were called *zenana* or, *antahpurbashini*. Seclusion was a sign of nobility as it meant that they could afford the luxury of a leisured and protected life. It has been revealed through the research of historians like Shahanara Hossain and F.E. Keay that, beginning from ancient times, throughout the middle ages, and during Mughal rule, these ladies of the upper classes were, more often than not, accomplished women of letters. It was not uncommon for them to receive lessons in Arabic and Persian inside the *zenana*.[3]

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[1] For information on the historical process of the birth of the Bengali *bhadramahila*, see Murshid, Ghulam, *Reluctant Debutante: Response of Bengali Women to Modernization, 1849-1905* (Rajshahi: Sahitya Samsad, Rajshahi University, 1983), Borthwick, Meredith, *The Changing Role of Women in Bengal, 1849-1905* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), and, Amin, Sonia Nishat, *The World of Muslim Women in Colonial Bengal, 1876-1939* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996).

[2] For details on the demographic composition of Eastern Bengal, see Ahmed, Sharifuddin, *Dhaka: A Study in Urban History and Development, 1840-1921* (London: Curzon Press Ltd., 1986, 2nd edition by Academic Publishers Limited, Dhaka, 2004), and Mamoon, Muntasir, *Unish Shotokey Purva Banger Samaj, 1857-1905* (The Society of Eastern Bengal in the Nineteenth Century), Dhaka: CSS, Samaj Nirikshan Kendra, 1986.

[3] See Keay, F.E., *A History of Education in India and Pakistan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959), and Hossain, Shahanara, *The Social Life of Women in Early Medieval Bengal* (Dhaka: The Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, 1985).

Apart from the princesses and daughters of ministers, the other group of women who possessed a good knowledge of Vedic literature and poetry were courtesans and concubines.[4] This education, as was the case in England also, was not institutional or formal. Well-to-do families who could afford it, arranged for the girls of the family to receive rudimentary education based on religious scriptures from in-house governesses or peripatetic teachers. Daughters of the non-elite members of society did, on occasion, attend the village *pathshala*, *madrassah* or *maktab*, the indigenous educational institutions that were set up adjacent to a temple or a mosque to cater to the educational needs of the boys.[5] The girls who attended these indigenous schools left too young to retain any of the education they gained, as the average marriage of a girl ranged between eight and eleven years. In the predominantly agricultural society of Eastern Bengal, formal education for boys was a luxury in itself, while the institutional education of girls was not an option at all. The investment in an education for a girl yielded no benefits, least of all in the marriage market. The Reverend William Adam of Dunfermline, Scotland, who was appointed by the Baptist Missionary Society to work in India in 1818 but who later seceded from the BMS in 1821, writes in his reports on indigenous elementary education in Bengal that because it was considered 'improper' to bestow any education on girls and because that sort of knowledge was supposed to be most inauspicious to their husbands, husbands were sometimes deceived into believing that the young wives had not acquired any form of literacy.[6] It is this mindset that the pioneers of women's education had to contend against and eventually conquer.

The colonial encounter, among other things, impacted women's lives most in the form of institutional education which led to more far-reaching social changes than any social reform initiatives could hope to achieve. Jogesh Chandra Bagal strongly asserts that the emancipation of the women of India in general, and Bengal in particular, through the introduction of institutional education has been the greatest benefit that India has

[4] Hossain, Shahanara, *Ibid.*, p. 45.
[5] For detailed information on indigenous schools, see Shahidullah, Kazi, *Patshalas into Schools: The Development of Indigenous Elementary Education in Bengal, 1854-1905* (Calcutta: Firma KLM Private Limited, 1987).
[6] Hartog, Sir Philip, *Some Aspects of Indian Education Past and Present*, published for the University of London Institute of Education by Oxford University Press, 1939, p. 53.

derived from the colonial encounter and the influence of European thought.[7] The slow but sure progress took place simultaneously in formal institutions and through the parallel system of home teaching institutionalized by the Christian missionary women as the 'zenana education system.' In the second half of the nineteenth century, a section of Bengali women encountered the world outside the household from within the boundaries of their four walls through the peripatetic system that the missionaries developed because the elite of the society would not send their wards to the schools the missionaries established. Beginning from the 1850s, Church missions of every denomination saw a swelling of the ranks of female missionaries, a phenomenon that was unique in mission history. Was this unique phenomenon the result of a sudden surge of altruism towards the women of the empire? Why did the second half of the nineteenth century bring so many women missionaries from Britain, America and Canada to the colonies and why did the phenomenon erode at the beginning of the 20th century? Given the dominant-subordinate characteristic of the power structure of the colonial society of Bengal, which racial/ethnic category of women benefitted more: the dominant race/ethnic group of the white woman, or the subordinate race/ethnic group of indigenous women? Was India a place where the educated women from England could escape for opportunities of spiritual satisfaction and professional achievement? What effect, if any, did missionary imperialism have on the development of movements and institutions for the progress of Indian women? These are some of the questions explored in this thesis.

How Burdensome was the 'White Woman's Burden'?

The phenomenal rise in the number of female missionaries in every denomination of the Christian Church in the second half of the nineteenth century has been termed by Barbara Ramusack as a period of 'maternal imperialism'. She views the pioneering women whose arrival in India paved the way for other white women as 'cultural missionaries' who

[7] For documentation of the beginnings of female education in Bengal, see Bagal, Jogesh Chandra, *Women's Education in India: The First Phase* (Calcutta: The World Press Private Ltd., 1956).

preached the gospel of women's uplift.[8] While the British colonial government was least concerned with initiating reforms for women and native men were deeply suspicious of any attempt on the part of the imperial power to pervade the sacred area of home and hearth, British women like Hanna Marshman, Mary Carpenter, Annette Akroyd, Annie Besant, Margaret Noble, to name a few of the early pioneers and the numerous others who followed them, made it their life's mission to alleviate the position of colonized Indian women. But how far was it pure altruism? Barbara Ramusack records how, for most of these single, educated women, India was a kind of escape from the emotional, and spiritual barrenness of the post-industrial society of nineteenth century Britain.[9] Annette Akroyd, who had shifted her position from one of an ardent activist for the spread of female education in Bengal, to settle into a quiet life of domesticity after her marriage with the notable Orientalist and civil servant Henry Beveridge, thought that life in England was a "boring life of moral classes, ragged school collections, balls, social engagements, visits, journeys to London and yearly trips to the seaside"[10] and to escape such a life of "blankness" and "dreariness inexpressible", she came to Bengal in search of a more meaningful existence that her Unitarian upbringing urged her to lead.

By the second half of the nineteenth century, England had a sizeable number of educated women who suffered emotionally and materially from the lack of gainful employment. These women who did not belong to the working class or were aspiring to climb the social hierarchical ladder through an education, could only become governesses in upper class homes. There were only so many teaching jobs to be held at formal institutions as primary and secondary education for girls was not all that widespread and higher education was still out of bounds for women. The problem was truly acute for middle class educated women as summarized by Michael Sanderson: "The problem in the 1840-70 period was largely a middle-class one of finding careers for unmarried middle-class ladies...Around 1850 existing careers were limited and becoming a

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[8] Ramusack, Barbara N., 'Cultural Missionaries, Maternal Imperialists, Feminist Allies: British Women Activists in India, 1865-1945' in Nupur Chaudhuri and Margaret Strobel (eds.), *Western Women and Imperialism: Complicity and Resistance* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), pp.120-136.
[9] *Ibid.*, p. 128.
[10] Quoted in Kopf, David, *The Brahmo Samaj and the Shaping of the Modern Indian Mind* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), p. 35.

governess was the only means of earning her livelihood open to the woman of gentle birth."[11] In Rosalind Miles' opinion, it was the paradox of Empire that while the colonized women fell victim to the domination of white males in addition to their own, 'Britannia's daughters', as she terms the white women who took advantage of their superior position as representatives of the ruling race, seized the opportunity "of escaping the stifling narrowness of home to become doctors, teachers, leaders, fighters or farmers in the field."[12]

It was not, however, only the British women for whom missionary engagement was a romantic alternative to the "excruciatingly boring life" of women whose life options were limited to becoming a factory girl or a governess or finding a suitable matrimonial match. In North America, in the nineteenth century, college graduates increasingly began to find joining the women's foreign missionary movement more attractive than taking up a life of improved domesticity and motherhood as a profession after attaining a college education.[13] By the end of the nineteenth century, American women missionaries came to numerically dominate the Christian missions in India. In Canada, the Toronto-based Women's Foreign Missionary Society (WFMS) was set up under the auspices of the Presbyterian Church. Following in the footsteps of British and American women, in Canada, by the 1870s and 1880s, the three largest Protestant denominations, the Methodists, Presbyterians, and Anglicans, began to support women's missionary work. For Canadian women like Dr. Dean Dow, Dr. Marion Olive, Jean Sinclair or Maggie Mackellar, the work they did in the distant Eastern lands halfway across the globe, held rich possibilities for personal and spiritual fulfillment.[14] Mission fields in India and China provided women with career opportunities that were virtually

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[11] Sanderson, Michael, *Education, economic change and society in England 1780-1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995. Second edition published by the Cambridge University Press on behalf of the Economic History Society, 1995), p. 56.

[12] Miles, Rosalind, *The Women's History of the World* (London: Paladin Grafton Books, A Division of the Collins Publishing Group, 1988), p. 216.

[13] Barbara Miller Solomon's *In the Company Educated Women: A History of Women and Higher Education in America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985) describes in detail how frustrated the college educated women were in the second half of the nineteenth century at the lack of meaningful employment.

[14] The full history of Canadian women's involvement in overseas missionary work can be found in Brouwer, Ruth Compton, *New Women for God: Canadian Presbyterian Women and India Missions, 1876-1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990).

unavailable in Canada and when these women returned home on furlough or after completing their mission, they were treated as celebrities and recognized as public role models. Yet, though these exceptional women extended the boundaries of women's traditional roles through their work in the mission fields, that fact did not necessarily contribute to the opening of new and larger opportunities for professional women in Canada.[15]

Missionary societies, well aware, by the second half of the nineteenth century of the great reservoir of potential that remained untapped, began to appeal to those 'whose energies find little scope in their own land'.[16] Irene Petrie, a young woman from an upper-middle-class background, had come to Kashmir in 1894 as a missionary of the Church Missionary Society only to die three years later doing mission work in Tibet. Her biographer Cars-Wilson, while explaining the motives of Miss Petrie and other Victorian women like her persuasively argues that the "duty of that large class of women who have health, leisure, good education and sufficient means was not fulfilled by occasional guineas to charities or by bazaars, but ... by living out altruism, not as a nineteenth century phrase, but as a first-century principle."[17] Thus for Victorian women, missionary work not only provided avenues for independent adventure, it also created opportunities to forge matrimonial relationships, opportunities which had not been available at home. The missionary historian C.P. Williams shows how mission societies tried to deter women from leaving the missions for marriage or other reasons by signing an agreement stating that the costs of training, outfit and travel would be repaid on a sliding scale according to length of service by those who left the societies within an agreed period, which usually was five years.[18] Nevertheless, a sufficiently large number did get married, which, in the World Missionary Conference of 1910 held in Edinburgh was viewed as a

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[15] Ibid., p. 193.

[16] *Report of the London Missionary Society for 1882*, p. 32, cited in Fiona Bowie, Deborah Kirkwood and Shirley Ardener (eds.), *Women and Missions: Past and Present: Anthropological and Historical Perceptions* (Providence: Berg Publishers, 1993), p.61.

[17] Carus-Wilson, A., *Irene Petrie: Missionary to Kashmir* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1901), p.27, cited in Bowie, Kirkwood and Ardener (eds.), *Women and Missions*, ibid.

[18] Williams, C.P., 'The Recruitment and Training of Overseas Missionaries in England between 1850 and 1900, with Special Reference to the Records of the Church Missionary Society, the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society, the London Missionary Society and the China Inland Mission', University of Bristol MLitt (1976), cited in Bowie, Kirkwood and Ardener (eds.), *Women and Missions*, p. 62.

'grave problem', and created often as a result of taking up a 'mistaken vocation'.[19] The typical salary of about 100 pounds sterling per annum (a single man could expect 140 pounds sterling per annum) together with accommodation, by contemporary standards, was also a temptation to many women as that amount was much more than could be expected in other spheres of work. Having said that, it is important to remember that a large number of women came from a holiness background and the sacred ambition of suffering for Christ's sake and total submission to God's will was axiomatic of that age.

In Britain, the census of 1851 had come as a startling awakening to the fact that a considerable number of women would face the prospect of spinsterhood as the male-female ratio stood at 1,000 men for 1,050 women. According to the Registrar-General, "Out of every 100 females of twenty years of age and upwards, fifty-seven are wives, thirteen are widows, and thirty are spinsters."[20] That meant that they would have to carve out occupations for themselves which, in the second half of the nineteenth century, were not easy to come by. The thousands who were being absorbed into the textile industry as 'factory girls' were not the problem. It was the thousands of women the middle and upper classes who were counted among the "surplus" or the "redundant" women.[21] Emigration from England to the Americas, to New Zealand, Canada and the colonies, not to mention casualties from the incessant wars England was embroiled in, created the population imbalance. As Rathbone puts it in *Why Are Women Redundant*, it is the women from the middle and upper classes "who were raised by fortune above the necessity of caring for their own subsistence, but to whom employment is a necessity as imperious to the milliner or the husbandman, because only employment can fill the dreary void of an unshared existence; -- beautiful lay nuns, involuntary takers of the veil, -- who pine for work, who beg for occupation, who pant for interest in life..."[22] Inherent in such representations of Victorian women are the tensions of a complex society born out of

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[19] World Missionary Conference, 1910 (n.d.), *Report of Commissions*, 10 vols, (Edinburgh: Oliphant, Anderson & Ferrier, 1910), cited in ibid.
[20] *Population Return*, 1851, vol. ii, p. clxv, cited in Greg, William Rathbone, *Why Are Women Redundant* (London: N. Trübner & Co., 1869), p. 12.
[21] W.R. Greg, *Why Are Women Redundant*, p. 18.
[22] Ibid., p. 6.

industrialization in the previous century. [23] It turned out that, as a direct result of the failure of the western societies to provide for their educated women neither in the professions, nor in the matrimonial sector, it was the colonies where they were eventually absorbed as educators, nurses, doctors, but, most of all, missionaries, among whom there were different categories.

Categorizing Female Missionaries:

Women were active as missionary apostles from the earliest days of Christianity, as is known from the letters of St. Paul. In his letter to the Romans the apostle Paul seeks all cooperation for Sister Phoebe who served the Church at Chenchrae. Priscilla appears to be the first example of the missionary wife, helping her husband Aquila, as mentioned in the New Testament. Women missionaries maintained a prominent role in the Church throughout the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, but gradually became marginalized from the 17th century onwards as a side effect of the Inquisition's war against the practice of witchcraft. In the second half of the nineteenth century when women's missions again became a significant aspect of church activity.[24] It was in the second half of the nineteenth century that feminization of the Protestant missions began to take place as the dual effect of the socio-economic changes in post-Industrial England and the establishment of Empire. British missionary activities during that period opened up avenues for American and Canadian missions as well. A distinct feature of renewed female missions was the presence of a large number of single women. They formed a separate category and were missionaries in their own right, doing paid work. Mission historians Stephen Neill, Ruth Compton Brouwer, Deborah Kirkwood *et al* have drawn attention to two more categories, which are, wives of missionaries, and missionary wives. The differences between the two latter categories, the historians insist, should not be overlooked.

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[23] For a discussion on the sharpening cultural devaluation and marginalization of women in metropolitan England and the complex role the colonial enterprise played in the tensions and contradictions of gender, race and class, see Sen, Indrani, *Woman and Empire: Representations in the Writings of British India (1858-1900)* (Hyderabad: Orient Longman Private Limited, 2002).

[24] The process through which the marginalization of women took place in the Church is beyond the scope of this study. For details see Bowie, Kirkwood and Ardener (eds.), *Women and Missions*, *op.cit.*

Missionaries were encouraged to take their wives with them so that they could set examples of good Christian wives and mothers, serve as models of good female behavior, and, with their husbands, demonstrate the virtues and merits of a monogamous Christian way of live. An important part of their work was the task of imparting knowledge of Western domestic skills like primary health and hygiene, cooking, sewing and laundry to the indigenous women.[25] Women who went overseas with their missionary husbands had to set examples of good wives and good mothers as the ultimate Christian ideal in every missionary outpost, whether in India, Africa or Australia, for the locals to see first-hand how Christianity promised a 'better' life. Joining in the proselytizing work of their husbands, beyond their domestic duties, was optional for the wives of missionaries. Many diaries and letters of the wives of missionaries have survived to show how much the Church demanded of them and how little of their work was acknowledged.[26] Norman Goodall pays tribute to the wives of missionaries in his authoritative history of the London Missionary Society thus:[27]

> "Apart from all that a wife's companionship means in a man's work, apart from the distinctive contribution in Christian witness which a missionary's home offers, there has always been rendered by missionaries' wives an immense volume of work in schools, dispensaries and cottage industries, in translation and literary work, in the training of women workers, and in experiments that bear the stamp of creative originality. To have attempted a record of this work, or even to have named all the outstanding illustrations of it would have been too large an undertaking."

Missionary wives, on the other hand, were required by the Church to assist their husbands in their missionary work. In fact, in Deborah Kirk's words, "missionary wives were not only 'married to the job' but they were often married for the job; when a young missionary wife died her widower would seek a replacement, very often from within the wider family circle of missionaries."[28] There were missions-minded women who sought

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[25] For more, see Deborah Kirkwood, 'Protestant Missionary Women: Wives and Spinsters', in Fiona Bowie, Deborah Kirkwood and Shirley Ardener (eds.), *Women and Missions: Past and Present: Anthropological and Historical Perceptions*, pp.23-41.
[26] Grimshaw, Patricia and Kirkby, Diane (eds.), *Dealing with Difference: Essays in Gender, Culture and History* (Melbourne: History Department, University of Melbourne, 1997), p. 48.
[27] Goodall, Norman, *A History of the London Missionary Society, 1895-1945* (London, 1954), cited in Fiona Bowie et al (eds.), *Women and Missions*, op.cit., p. 28.
[28] Kirkwood, Ibid., p. 27.

husbands who would take them to heathen lands, just as male missionaries sought helpmates who would support them in their work. Becoming a missionary wife thus allowed women to have both marriage and career. The relative 'invisibility' of the missionary wives in official reports has caused most researchers to gloss over the crucial contribution they made. The unfortunate part was that in most cases, they were not even remunerated, depending on the financial condition of a particular mission. When a single female missionary got married to a colleague, most Missions, like the LMS, stopped remuneration to the missionary wife even though she continued her work in the field.[29] The Church Missionary Society, however, provided a joint allowance to husband and wife.

In whatever category they may have been, female missionaries were invaluable to the Church because unless the women of India could be reached, conversion would remain negligible. Indian women may have had little influence in the public space but in the private space, their effectiveness as the tutor of early religious and moral education of the rising generation was unlimited. Thus, access to women was of vital importance for effective proselytization and such access was next to impossible to gain by male missionaries. Opening schools for girls was the first step towards influencing the future generations of mothers. Education is implicit in the concept of mission and all missionaries, therefore, were educators of sorts. The problem in Bengal, however, appeared to be that the upper classes did not send their female wards to the schools that the missionaries had established. So a method was devised that suited the social norms of Bengal while serving the ends of the Church. That devise was the zenana education scheme, where education was taken to the homes of girls through the peripatetic teaching method. Once the missionaries devised the scheme of going from door to door to educate the ladies of the households instead of direct proselytization, the method gained the full support of the Government in the form of grants of financial aid to missionary societies.[30]

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[29] Ibid., p. 28.

[30] The Annual Report on Education for 1877-78 shows that, of the Rs.16,420 spent on zenana education, Rs. 14,804 was spent as grants to missionary societies. Bengal Education Proceedings (A) for the month of July 1878 to July 1879, Circular n. 45 and nos. 3691-92, dated October, 1878, File III, No. 12, NA,B.

In the hands of the Christian missionaries, peripatetic teaching received the cognition of 'zenana education'. Zenana educations was institutionalized chiefly because the upper class girls, as a rule, maintained strict purdah and thus were not sent to the various schools the Christian missionaries had established. The Christian missionaries desperately wanted to convert the social leaders of the native population to achieve the ripple down effect (which did not happen). In course of time, active participation from the colonial government and local agency turned the small ventures of a few missionary women into an institution. As the very epistemology of the term suggests, it was education for the ladies of the upper echelon of Bengal society. It was quite costly to invite a peripatetic teacher. Meredith Borthwick is rather unceremonious about the non-egalitarian aspect of this mode of education: "*Zenana* education was not freely available to the *chotolok,* and therefore was compatible with the preservation of *bhadralok* status".[31] Peripatetic teaching for the upper class girls was institutionalized as Zenana Education.

Distinction between Home Education and Zenana Education:

The tradition of giving education to upper class girls at home and the institution of *zenana* education were distinct from one another. Meredith Borthwick in her pioneering work, *The Changing Role of Women in Bengal*[32] says that home education is the education that female wards received informally from the male members of the family. It could be the father, or a brother or the husband. The most illustrious figure in Bengal who

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[31] Borthwick, Meredith, *The Changing Role of Women in Bengal, 1849-1905* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), p. 71.

[32] Borthwick, Meredith, *Ibid.,* pp. 68-80. For detailed discussions on zenana education see, Roy, Benoy Bhusan and Ray, Pranati, *Zenana Mission: The Role of Christian Missionaries for the Education of Women in 19th Century Bengal* (Delhi: Indian Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1998), Roy, Benoy Bhusan, *Antahpurer Strisiksha* (A short history of women's education in Bengal), Kolkata: Naya Udyog, 1998, Lahiri, Krishna, 'Education of Women in Bengal, 1849-1882, With Special Reference to Missionary Contributions' (Ph.D. Thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 1979), University Microfilm International, Ann Arbor, Michigan, U.S.A., 1985. References to zenana education in other parts of India are available in Minault, Gail, *Secluded Scholars: Women's Education and Muslim Social Reform in Colonial India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998) and Hasan, Zoya and Menon, Ritu, *Educating Muslim Girls: a comparison of five Indian cities* (New Delhi: Women Unlimited, an associate of Kali for Women, 2005).

was educated at home, secretly, at the dead of night, first by her brother and then by her husband, was Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain. Her contribution to the spread of female education in Calcutta has earned her a permanent place in the annals of the history of female education in Bengal.

Women of the elite classes in both the Hindu and Muslim communities would be given rudimentary education so that their respective religious scriptures could be read. They learned how to sew clothes and do some embroidery as well. A clear demarcation between home education and zenana education can be made regarding the content of study. The home education scheme did not follow any recognized structure or curricula. Peripatetic teachers called *ustadni*s came to the homes of well-to-do people to teach their daughters how to read chiefly religious scripts. Zenana education is different from home education because when Christian missionaries began to teach in the zenana, they devised certain curricula and methods. In the second half of the nineteenth century, beginning from the 1860s, Hindu and Brahmo centers of zenana teaching sprang up with their own structured curricula. By the end of the nineteenth century, the Muslim leaders of society also organized zenana teaching centres for their womenfolk and they based that education on the curricula formulated by the Calcutta University. The Muslim *Suhrid Sammilani*, established in Dhaka in 1883 was one such group of enlightened Muslim men who dared not violate purdah, but wanted to spread education among Muslim girls. The group drew up a syllabus corresponding to the one in the Calcutta University, distributed books, provided private tuitions and held examinations in the *zenana*. They even distributed certificates.[33] Until 1905, when it ceased to exist, the Muslim *Suhrid Sammilani* had distributed certificates to a total of 37 students from Dacca, Barisal, Mymensingh and Calcutta. In the latter years after the Hunter Commission praised it as a good method of education and made specific recommendations, zenana education Inspectors inspected zenana education centers and took examinations. All in all, the term 'zenana education' is instantly recognizable as the door to door education system the Christian missionaries introduced. The 1860s saw a proliferation of local zenana agencies which had sprung up

[33] Amin, Sonia Nishat, *The World of Muslim Women in Colonial Bengal, 1876-1939* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996), p. 150.

as a reaction against aggressive proselytization attempts of the missionary ladies in the zenana mahals, but these indigenous efforts received the cognate of '*Antahpur Stree Shiksha*', the Sankrit for zenana education.

In 1908, special attention was drawn to the method of home education by the newly appointed Female Education Committee to the newly created province of Eastern Bengal and Assam. The Committee recommended that the standard of instruction should be on the same lines as those for zenana classes. It recommended that certificates and prizes be given to pupils after a simple test which was to be carried out under the supervision of local superintendents. Three committees were formed in the Sadr subdivision of the Bogra district, the Rajbari subdivision of the Faridpur district, and the Brahmanbaria subdivision of the Tippera district. It was also suggested that a sum of Rs. 500 be placed at the disposal of each of the three centers for the purpose of prizes and for printing of the certificates and other incidental expenses.[34] The Committee hoped that by giving certificates to these ladies, mistresses for *purdah* schools and zenana work could be procured.

The Shift from Missionary Schools to the Zenana Education Scheme:

Although the Christian missionaries are duly acknowledged for taking the initiative for the beginning of formal female education in India, all the missionary agencies, from the 1860s and for half a century afterwards, focused on peripatetic teaching, more commonly known as zenana education. From 1882 onwards, zenana education turned, not into an alternative form of education but a parallel institution to the modern formal schools. Historians give different dates for the beginning of zenana education in Bengal. Binoy Bhushon Roy and Pranati Roy mention that zenana education was introduced in 1841 in *Calcutta* by Miss Saville under the auspices of the Church of Scotland Women's Mission.[35] On the other hand, Helen Barrett Montgomery insists that the practice of

[34] Education (A) Proceedings, Assam Secretariat (Sylhet Proceedings), Government of East Bengal and Assam, File No. E-946 of 1909, April 1910, Nos. 1-8, National Archives and Library of Bangladesh (henceforth NAL,B).
[35] Roy, Benoy Bhusan and Ray, Pranati, *Ibid.*, p. 19.

zenana education began in Jessore of Eastern Bengal when Mrs. John Sully gained access to a local gentleman's home but unfortunately does not give a date![36] Yet another historian, Geraldine Forbes attributes the beginning of zenana education to Ms. H.C. Mullens (spelled Mulence by Benoy Bhushon Roy) who was invited by a gentleman in Calcutta to teach his wife embroidery.[37] The missionary newspaper *Somprakash* corroborates this information.[38] Hanna Catherine Mullens (or Mulence), however, took over the zenana work from Mrs. Elizabeth Sully, wife of the missionary John Sully, when they sailed back to England in 1861.

Prior to gaining government patronage and social recognition throughout the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century, the method of door-to-door teaching faced some resistance from Christian missionaries themselves at the beginning. In 1840, Dr. Thomas, a missionary of the United Free Church of Scotland submitted a proposal for a scheme of door-to-door education of Indian women which was turned down by other missionaries.[39] He submitted his proposal again at the Conference of the Calcutta Missionaries in 1853 which was rejected again on the grounds that it was 'unrealistic'. That was the year Alexander Duff sent Reverend Fordyce to Calcutta. His wife, not a missionary in her own right, assisted him in his work. In a conference in Calcutta in 1855 where the missionaries working in Bengal met, Mrs. Fordyce read an article that put forward the necessity of zenana education and Dr. Mulence (spelled Mullens by some historians) supported it. The proposal was finally accepted, after which seven denominations, including the Baptist and the London Mission, began zenana work immediately. The seven denominations were joined later by other missionary organizations including ones from North America. So it was that although zenana work started in approximately 1841, it gained full steam after the 1850s.

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[36] Montgomery, Helen Barrett, *Western Women in Eastern Lands* (New York, 1910), p. 108.
[37] Forbes, Geraldine, 'In Search of the 'Pure Heathen': Missionary Women in Nineteenth Century India', *Economic and Political Weekly,* Vol. XXI, No. 17, Review of Women Studies, April 26, 1986, p. WS-3.
[38] Mrs. Lewis, C.B., *Zenana Work: its origin and progress*, Calcutta, 1876, p. 5, cited in Roy, Benoy Bhusan and Ray, Pranati, *Ibid.*, p. 184.
[39] Roy, Benoy Bhusan and Ray, Pranati, *Ibid.*, p. 19.

Eastern Bengal as Missionary Outpost:

Single women looking for a vocation kept joining overseas missions as missionaries. Hence, various denominational churches had the numerical strength to send representatives to the remotest parts of the British Empire. The Roman Catholic Mission had visiting governesses even in the Khasiya and Jaintia Hills. The Raj encouraged missionary activities among the tribal people as part of the grand imperial design to bring them, to use Kalyan Kumar Sengupta's phrase, 'within the vortex of colonial economy and exploitation.'[40] Sita Ram Goel, however, has argued the case of the thrust of missionary activity among the tribal people from a strong Hindu nationalistic perspective in the book *History* of *Hindu-Christian Encounters*.[41] He argues that, although Alexander Duff (made a member of the Committee of Public Instruction in 1834) and T.B. Macaulay (a member of the Governor General's Council) were highly optimistic that Western education would be instrumental in bringing the idolaters of India under the fold of Christianity,[42] their dreams were thwarted by one Narendranath Datta (1863-1902), known better as Swami Vivekananda. Swami Vivekananda, says Goel, single-handedly turned the tide against Christianity among the educated, upper class Bengalis, forcing the Christian missionaries to recede into the tribal belts for achieving conversions.[43] Apart from the tribal belts of Mymensingh and Chittagong, zenana agencies were at work in Faridpur, Barisal, Bogra, Comilla, Noakhali, and, of course, Dacca. According to education reports of 1910, zenana agencies were planning to extend their work in Pabna and Sylhet.[44]

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[40] Sengupta, Kalyan Kumar, 'Peasant and Tribal Movements in Eastern India in the Second Half of the 19th Century: Some Conceptual Problems', in Roy, Ranjit Kumar (ed.), *The Imperial Embrace: Society and Polity under the Raj* (Kolkata: Rabindra Bharati University, 1993), pp. 22.
[41] Goel, Sita Ram, *History of Hindu-Christian Encounters: AD 304 to 1996* (New Delhi: Voice of India, 1986), second revised and enlarged edition, 1996, p. 92.
[42] *Ibid.*, pp. 93-94.
[43] *Ibid.*, p. 92.
[44] Education A Proceedings, Government of East Bengal and Assam (Sylhet Proceedings), File No. E/946 of 1909, Nos. 1-8, Bangladesh National Archives, Dhaka.

Another factor in the proliferation of missionary activity in Eastern Bengal since the latter half of the nineteenth century was the strong anti-missionary reaction that grew in strength from the 1860s in Calcutta. Societies and associations were formed to counter the evangelical attempts of the missionary organizations. The radical nationalist note in the neo-Hindu movement of the 1880s and 1890s was also an added factor.[45] It became increasingly difficult for Christian missions to run smoothly as the Hindu revivalist movement aimed chiefly to attack imperialism and western culture. That made them directly to clash with Christian missions as they represented western culture and were infiltrating Indian homes and 'corrupting' the women and children. Thus, while the Christian Evangelist Movement of the 1850s brought a rush of missionary activities in Bengal, the Hindu revivalism of the 1870s, especially signified by Swami Vivekananda presented missionary activity with serious resistance.[46] So it was just not by accident that missionaries moved more into the hinterland and into tribal areas. Missionary societies felt obliged to move into remote areas because there not only did they not encounter strong resistance from Hindus and Muslims, but were made to feel welcome by the tribal communities. For the Garos and tribals of Khasia, Jyantia mountains, Christianity was accompanied by modern education and a chance to improve their financial conditions. Since the British intrusion in the Khasi and Jyantia Hills in 1824, Christian missionaries had followed in the heels of government officials, teachers, artisans, in search of new horizons.[47] The presence of Welsh missionaries in those areas is now almost slipping into oblivion. The Welsh historian Aled Gruffydd Jones regrets that the account of the long association between Bengal and Wales through the missionaries of the Calvinist sect, the Welsh Calvinistic Methodists, has lapsed into historical amnesia.[48] They had established a base in Shillong in the Khasi Hills in 1840.[49] Having met little or no resistance from Hinduism and Islam, the Christian church they established consisted of

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[45] See Chaudhuri, Tripti, 'The Brahmo and the Neo-Hindu Movements: Perceptions of the British Protestant Missionaries,' in Roy, Ranjit Kumar (ed.), *The Imperial Embrace: Society and Polity under the Raj* (Kolkata: Rabindra Bharati University, 1993), pp. 51-72.

[46] See Goel, Sita Ram, *History of Hindu-Christian Encounters: AD 304 to 1996* (New Delhi: Voice of India, 1st edition, 1986, 2nd and enlarged edition, 1996).

[47] Ray, B.Datta elaborates this theme in *The Emergence and Role of the Middle Class in Northern India* (New Delhi: Uppal Publishing House, 1983).

[48] Jones, Aled Gruffydd, 'Imagining Bengal: Bengali Culture and the Welsh National Awakening, 1840-1966,' *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bangladesh* (Humanities), Vol. 49, Number 1, June, 2004, p. 81.

[49] *Ibid.*, p. 83.

thousands of converted members. When the Welsh missionaries extended their work to the plains of Sylhet in 1850, that is when they began to face difficulty in evangelical work and conversion became limited. The Islamic civic culture was firmly established in the plains of Sylhet due to the legacy of Hazrat Shah Jalal (R), which the external force of Christianity had no way of challenging.[50] However, notwithstanding limited results in conversions, the Welsh Calvinistic mission in Sylhet was so successful in providing female missionaries to visit zenanas regularly from the 1880s that requests for visitations have been more than the Mission was able to meet.[51] The missionaries visited the zenanas once or twice a week, between twelve noon and five o'clock in the afternoon because that was when the ladies and girls of the household could spare some time out of domestic responsibilities. All the zenana pupils were drawn from respectable Hindu and Muslim families. They were taught reading, writing, arithmetic, sewing, cutting and nursing. The Welsh Calvinistic Mission strongly advocated the need for holding examinations and giving prizes and certificates to the successful students to give them a sense of purpose. The Welsh presence in Sylhet continued until 1966.

The thrust into the remotest parts of the British Empire got further incentive from the Hunter Commission of 1882 which recommended that government grant-in-aid be extended to peripatetic teachers. On the basis of the apparent demand for peripatetic teachers from both the Hindu and Muslim communities, the Simla Education Conference of 1901 recorded recommendations to formulate proper government policy that would facilitate the expansion of zenana education. The greatest impetus, however, came on the eve of the partition of Bengal. Eastern Bengal gained an importance it had not hitherto enjoyed in the political game of the colonizers. In the face of nascent nationalist agitation led by the Calcutta-based intelligentsia, the colonial government sought to woo the densely populated, vast agricultural hinterland of Eastern Bengal by promising them a

[50] For a discussion on the history of the expansion of Islam in Sylhet, see Abdul Karim, 'Advent of Islam in Sylhet and Hazrat Shah Jalal (R)' in Sharif uddin Ahmed (ed.), *Sylhet, History and Heritage* (Dhaka: Bangladesh Itihas Samiti, 1999), pp. 129-149.

[51] 'Circular Issued to Missions Relating to Zenana Classes and Reports coming in from the various Missions,' Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam Education (A) Proceedings, File no. E/946 of 1909, nos. 1-8, pp. 207-215, National Archives of Bangladesh.

better future under the British Raj.[52] The Eastern part of Bengal could be a strong power base if the hitherto neglected province could be transformed and modernized and what better way to do it than to concentrate on the education, both male and female? The new Government of East Bengal and Assam (1905-1911) took heed of the recommendations made by the Simla Conference, which were basically a reiteration of the recommendations made by the Education Commission of 1882. The Commission had made three main recommendations: a) that grants for zenana teaching should be recognized as a charge on public funds, b) that education for the zenana should be secular, and, c) that the pupils should be tested by an Inspectress or any other female agent. The Government of India agreed that the instruction given by governesses in zenanas ought to be encouraged by grants-in-aid and that the work of zenana education should be developed under the control of an adequate female inspecting agency. About the recommendation of a secular curriculum, the Government of India remained silent. But that the Hunter Commission recommended a secular curriculum is a reflection of the strong message the interviewees could get across to the Commission about how they felt about the attempts at proselytization in the name of education in the zenana.

A qualitative change was introduced among the teaching staff for the zenana education system at the turn of the new century. In 1902, twelve peripatetic teachers were placed on the Government pay-roll for the first time. None of them were Christian or missionaries, but were Hindus and Muslims. They were to receive salaries of Tk. 30 per month. As they were on the government pay-roll, they were not allowed to take remuneration from the families they were visiting. The government called this scheme 'zenana education by house-to-house visitation'. The native aversion towards proselytization by Christian missionary teachers must have been quite pronounced, and the government must have felt obliged to pay attention to that aversion because the peripatetic teachers on government pay-roll had to be orthodox Hindu or Muslim women. However, in the quinquennial report of 1901-2---1906-7, the Inspectress Miss Brock expressed great dissatisfaction in the work of these twelve governesses. There was a huge

[52] See McClane, John R., 'Partition of Bengal 1905: A Political Analysis', in Sirajul Islam (ed.), *History of Bangladesh 1704-1971* (Dhaka: Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, 1992), vol. ii, pp. 165-7.

question mark about the qualifications of these governesses and their commitment to the work they were entrusted with. The Inspectress felt that the reason that these teachers lacked commitment and showed no eagerness to improve themselves was because their salary did not depend on the results. Reports about zenana governesses reveal that, in Dacca, in 1907, a Muslim and Brahmo zenana governess were receiving Tk. 50 per month, with an additional amount of Tk. 25 per month as conveyance allowance.[53] Twenty-one Hindu and seventeen Muslim girls were on the rolls of these classes during the period between 1901-02 to 1906-07. The Hindu classes appeared to have done good work but, according to the Inspectress' report, the Muslim pupils failed to show progress due to the incompetence of the Muslim teacher.

Government experiments with zenana education were extended to Barisal and Noakhali too. A zenana class for Muslim *pardanashin* ladies was opened at Ulania in 1903 at an annual cost of Tk. 360. The amount was met from provincial revenues. It had twelve ladies under its instruction but the number dropped to ten the following year. The experiment proved to be a frustrating one both from the financial and the academic point of view judging from the comments of Mr. H.E. Stapleton, Esq., the Inspector of Schools, Dacca Division. Mr. Stapleton remarked that "beyond teaching elements of Bengali language to about a dozen Mohammedan girls of a particular family it did nothing good".[54] He strongly felt that the primary duty of the State was educating the masses and that the cost of one zenana class may help to run half-a-dozen primary schools for girls. Nevertheless, zenana classes continued to be held there and the zenana teachers were supervised by Miss Moore of the American Baptist Mission according to the report of received by the Female Education Committee. The Committee recommended that Government should make a grant of Rs. 100 a month to the American Baptist Mission, Barisal, for the improvement and development of zenana work in the Bhil tracts.

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[53] Extract from the Report on the Progress of Education in Eastern Bengal and Assam during the years 1901-1902—1906-1907, Education (A) Proceedings, Assam Secretariat (Sylhet Proceedings), Government of East Bengal and Assam, File No. E/946 of 1909, April 1910, Nos. 1-8, Bangladesh National Archives, Dhaka.

[54] Education (A) Proceedings, Assam Secretariat (Sylhet Proceedings), Government of East Bengal and Assam, File No. E-946 of 1909, April 1910, Nos. 1-8, NAL,B.

The experience with experiments in zenana education with governesses on government pay-roll in Noakhali (a town in the Chittagong Division) seemed to be better than Barisal. The experiment began in January, 1904. The classes started with 60 pupils although the report does not say how many of them were Hindus and how many were Muslims. By the fiscal year 1906-1907 the numbers rose to 105 pupils (98 Hindu and 7 Muslims). In 1907-08, there were 122 pupils enrolled in 18 zenana centers. Each centre received a visit from a governess once a month. The governess refused to visit the centers more frequently because of the high cost of conveyance which was not included in her allowance. How much progress can be achieved from one lesson once a month is not too hard to imagine. Nevertheless, the zenana work at Noakhali seems to have impressed the Inspectress of Schools, Miss Brock. In her report of 1919-20, she wrote that the governesses at Noakhali were doing the best job in East Bengal.[55] In the DPI's report of 1909, it was mentioned that there were eighty-three pupils attending zenana classes. Of them, sixty-eight were married or widowed. There was only one teacher for all these pupils. The mistress was Srimati Premamayee Aich, wife of the Head Pandit of the Noakhali Girls' Middle Vernacular School.[56] Her educational qualifications were up to the Upper Primary Standard and an added advantage was her skill at needlework. The classes were held in nineteen centers, all located in Hindu quarters. The centers were all within a radius of half a mile. The teaching was confined to reading, writing, sewing and knitting, with more attention paid to the last two. The mistress attended one centre a day where only two or three pupils attended. If the central gathering system could be introduced there, the mistress could make good on time spent on traveling from one centre to the other.

Although most of the missionary outposts of Eastern Bengal that had begun zenana education in the middle of the nineteenth century were gradually being taken over by government, the Bengal Evangelical Mission remained firmly stationed in Faridpur, a district south-west of Dacca, by the river Padma. Set up in 1847 by one Mathuranath

[55] Report on Public Instruction in Bengal for 1919-20 (Calcutta: The Bengal Secetariat Book Depot, 1921), compiled by W.W. Hornell, Director of Public Instruction, Bengal, p.18.
[56] Assam Secretariat (Sylhet Proceedings), Bengal Education (A) Proceedings, April 1910, File No. E-946 of 1909, Nos. 1-8, NAL,B.

Basu, the Bengal Evangelical Mission there had sixty women from different communities – Hindu, Muslim and Christian, studying under three peripatetic teachers according to a report of 1911.[57] The Mission report names Mrs. H.B. Sarkar, Miss H. Biswas and Mrs. H. Paul as the three teachers who had to go to the students' houses by boat.[58] The zenana education program ran there at a cost of Rs. 711/- and 5 annas per month. Government grant-in-aid amounted to Rs. 60/- per month. The Female Education Committee mentions the good work of the Faridpur *Suhrid Sabha* for promoting female education in the district.[59]

Changes in Modes of Zenana Education:

Zenana education as a form of female education developed sub-categories along its sojourn through 19th and early 20th century colonial Bengal. After putting the experiment with 'zenana education by house-to-house visitation' in motion, the Education Department convened a conference of Hindu and Muslim educational officers and took proposals from them regarding what else could be done. The Indian officials came up with a proposal which was accepted by the government. It was called the Central Gathering Scheme. The proposal was inspired by the desire to minimize the logistics of the system of zenana education, mainly the dearth of qualified native Hindu and Muslim teachers. The other factor under scrutiny was the small amount of time peripatetic teachers could devote to each pupil under the house-to-house visitation scheme. The proposal was accepted by the government and it went into force in 1903. A similar scheme had been suggested as early as 1877 by the then Director of Public Instruction A.W. Croft. To tackle the problem of the dearth of qualified teachers for the zenana, the DPI had suggested that zenana pupils be concentrated and brought together in one place for more continuous instruction rather than the two hours a week a peripatetic teacher

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[57] Cited in Roy, Binoy Bhusan and Ray, Pranati, *Zenana Mission: The Role of Christian Missionaries for the Education of Women in 19th Century Bengal* (Delhi: SPCK, 1998), p.22.
[58] *30th Year's Report of the Bengal Evangelical Mission*, Faridpur, 1911, pp. 19-30, cited in Binoy Bhusan and Ray, Pranati, *Ibid.*, p. 22.
[59] Education (A) Proceedings, Assam Secretariat (Sylhet Proceedings), Government of East Bengal and Assam, File No. E-349 of 1908, April 1908, Nos. 125-143, NAL,B.

could afford on house-to-house visitations.[60] The proposal had not created any ripple then, but, in due time, necessity induced the Education Department to act on such a proposal that had been presented without any reference to the early ideas of A.W. Croft.

The Central Gathering Scheme required students to gather at a designated place, almost in all cases a respectable gentleman's house where the women and girls of the neighborhood would not be unwilling to come. A small committee of local gentlemen would appoint the teacher and have control over management. They could be orthodox Hindus or Muslims, or their numbers could be in proportion to the pupils of a particular Centre. No male inspector was to visit the centers or contact the teachers. Male inspecting officers not lower in rank than Deputy Inspectors of Schools were to visit the members of management committee to collect information and make recommendations. Thus strict purdah was ensured and the management committee entrusted with the highest responsibility for smooth running of the operation. Government sanctioned a recurring cost of Tk. 30 per month for each centre. The teacher was to be paid Tk. 20 per month. Tk. 4 per month was to be paid to a servant. And Tk. 6 per month was earmarked for prizes and contingent charges.

Many Central Gathering Centers had sprung up in Dhaka during the first quinquennium of 1901-1902—1906-1907. In the Center in Roy Saheb Bazar, such was the assortment of women and children that the age range of the pupils varied from five to forty-five years. In Rokanpur also, there was a mixture of young girls and older women. In the part of Dacca that is called Becharam Deury, three little girls were learning Bengali and Urdu letters. Some little girls were learning to read Bengali and Urdu in the Center at Bangsal. In the Lakshmi Bazar Center also, Bengali and Urdu letters were being taught. In Narandia, the Center was housed in the governess's own home. In Makim Bazar three girls were learning to read the Koran. The Center in Saheb Sharafat Gunge was teaching five girls who were learning Bengali, one girl who was learning Urdu and there was one girl who was learning both. In the Fulbaria Center the age of the pupils varied from

[60] Annual Report on Education for 1877-1878 by A.W. Croft, Esq., M.A., Director of Public Instruction, Proceedings for October 1878, Circular No. 45, Nos. 3691-92, dated October 29, 1878, Government of Bengal, General Department (Education), NAB.

eleven to forty years. There six pupils were learning Urdu and Bengali, two were learning only Urdu and one other was learning only Bengali. There were three other Centers in Monoharkhar Bazaar, Kagzitoa and Dakhin Moisondi where the number of pupils is not given in the report of the first quinquennium of the twentieth century.

The Christian missionary lobby was strong enough to extract from the government a Resolution (Resolution of Government of the 4th June 1903) issuing a caution that "this scheme was not to conflict in any way with the system of zenana instruction imparted by Mission ladies".[61] At the time when the Zenana Education Scheme was abolished in 1933, both the House-to-House Visitation Scheme and the Central Gathering Scheme were in operation. The Central Gathering system proved to be the more popular of the two schemes probably because it provided a chance for zenana ladies to venture out of the house and socialize with other ladies.

The Education Policy of 1904 and the Impetus to Zenana Education:

Zenana education was given a significant push in the Indian Education policy of 1904. Although the following year Bengal became divided and the government of the new province of Eastern Bengal and Assam set up a Female Education Committee to review the situation of female education of the province and recommend reforms, the decisions of the Education Policy of 1904 regarding zenana education were implemented in Eastern Bengal notwithstanding political and administrative divisions. The most noticeable features of the Policy that gave impetus to female education was: (a) the strengthening of the inspecting staff by the appointment of an Inspectress of Schools from England, and (b) facilitating the further expansion of female education by the appointment, by Government, of zenana teachers belonging to the orthodox class of Hindus and Muhammedans, and (c) by the opening of training classes for Hindu and Muhammedan

[61] Cited in the '*Report on Work of Zenana Governesses up to Date*', Enclosure No. 11, p. 202, Education (A) Proceedings, Assam Secretariat (Sylhet Proceedings), Government of East Bengal and Assam, File No. E/946 of 1909, April 1910, Nos. 1-8, NA, B.

widows and school-masters' wives.[62] Until then there were three categories of zenana teachers. In one category were the single female missionaries coming out of Britain, America and Canada, with the noble mission of freeing the Indian women form the shackles of servitude to their men folk through the light of education and Christianity . The second category would be the missionary wives and wives of missionaries, discussed earlier in the chapter, whose method of assisting their husbands was by reaching out to the women of the area where their husbands worked. Thirdly, there were the native converted women who were classified as the Bible Women by zenana agencies. These Bible Women assisted the missionaries with their instruction and were very useful as interpreters.

The lack of qualified female teachers was acutely felt in Eastern Bengal by the beginning of the twentieth century when the Muslim community gradually began to embrace the idea of educating their girls. Marriage at an early age, however, remained the norm and, more often than not, girls removed from schools after marriage lapsed into illiteracy. Therefore, the Education Department came to the conclusion that the education of girls should be continued in the zenana; and, if good results were to be secured, the teachers should be neither Christians, nor Brahmos, but Hindus and Muslims.[63] Hindu and Muslim ladies appointed by the government were to form the fourth category of zenana teachers that emerged in the early 20th century.

Bibi Amirunnessa, wife of Maulvi Abdus Samad, became the first Muslim lady in Eastern Bengal to become a Government-appointed peripatetic zenana teacher. No other personal information about her could be found from records. Miss M.E.A. Garret, the Inspectress of Schools for the province of Eastern Bengal was highly impressed with the keenness and hard work Bibi Amirunnessa put into her job.[64] Garret was also pleased to report in the academic year 1910-1911 that there had arisen amongst the Dacca ladies a

[62] General Report on Public Instruction in Bengal for 1903-04, Government of Bengal, General Department Education A Proceedings for the month of February, 1905, Nos. 1-6, File 8-R/3, NAB.
[63] 'Report on Public Instruction in Bengal for the year 1905-06', Government of Bengal, Education Proceedings (A) for the month of January, 1907, File 8-R/5, Nos. 138-142, p. 34, NA, B.
[64] 'Note by Inspectress on Zenana Classes, Dacca, 1910-1911,' *Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam Education (A) Proceedings for the month of January, 1912*, File No. E/25/E, Nos. 53-56, p. 59, National Archives, Bangladesh.

demand for an English tutor and a suitable lady, Mrs. Rudra had presented herself at the right time. Mrs. Rudra was unwilling to work on a salary less than Rs. 100 a month, so a grant-in-aid of Rs. 50 a month had been applied for her, the rest being charged from the students at Rs. Per student.[65] Miss Garret was in praise of the two Hindu teachers on the Government pay-roll, Miss Suniti Chatterji and Miss Giribala Biswas who appeared to be well trained. The Inspectress was disappointed with the performance of the second Muslim teacher, Fayajarennesa Khatun, wife of Ramjan Bhuiya, a teacher of Narinda School. Fayajarennesa Khatun was a village woman and knew a little proper Bengali and even less Urdu. The students she had to teach mostly spoke in Urdu. She could do simple arithmetic, but had no drawing or sewing skills. The Inspectress recommended she be sent to the teachers' training classes in Eden School that had opened since 1907.

The Government appointed peripatetic governesses were getting Rs. 50 as salary and Rs. 30 as conveyance allowance. Miss Giribala Biswas worked under the supervision of the Baptist Zenana Mission, Dacca, for which Government sanctioned a monthly grant-in-aid of Rs. 76 to the Mission. Before Miss Giribala was appointed, six households belonging to the Subarn Banikya caste was being taught by one Miss Shemoyoni Mondol, under the supervision of Miss Williamson of the BZM. The age of the pupils in those centres ranged from ten, eleven, twelve year-olds to twenty, thirty-six, thirty-seven, thirty-eight and forty-four year-old ladies. They were taught the Lower Primary and Upper Primary Science Reader, *Saral Shikha* and *Balya Shikha,* easy mathematical problems, tables, plain sewing, and simple drawing. Approximately three hundred ladies in Dacca had been taught to read, write, keep accounts, and acquire special needlework skills by the four governesses appointed by Government. It was the Miss Garrett's personal opinion that compared to the results obtained, the expenditure of Rs. 316 a month on governesses' salary and their conveyance allowance, along with a yearly contingent grant of Rs. 300 cannot be called a heavy toll.[66] Government also sanctioned a sum of Rs. 250 a year to spend on prizes for the zenana pupils. Such was the satisfaction of Government with the zenana scheme of education.

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[65] Ibid., p. 61.
[66] Ibid., p. 58.

The work load of the four peripatetic zenana teachers was quite heavy. They had to work double shifts and had to cover quite a distance going from one centre to another. Five Tables are provided below to show the name of the centres each teacher visited, the name of the person in whose house the centre was set up, the day of the visits, the working hours, the number of pupils on the roll and remarks of S. Das, the Assistant Inspectress of Schools. The schedules show that the teachers worked six days a week, two shifts a day, with only Sunday as a weekly holiday. Each governess was assigned six centres. But Bibi Amirunnessa took upon a more hectic workload than usual which prompted the Inspectress Miss Garret to comment: "I would especially commend Bibi Amirunnessa, wife of Maulvi Abdul Samad, the first Mahommedan lady in the province to undertake such work. Unfortunately she has been over keen and has knocked herself up so that she is now obliged to take leave."[67] The remarks made by the Inspectresses have been included in the Tables make for interesting reading. The general impression was that the once the attention of the zenana ladies could be drawn, they were eager learners. Tables 1.1 and 1.2 show the schedule of Bibi Amirunnessa, while Tables 1.3 and 1.4 show that of Miss Suniti Chatterjee and Miss Giribala Biswas respectively. Table 1.5 describes the schedule of Fayajarunnesa Khatun:

[67] Ibid., p. 61

Table 1.1: Statement of Zenana Home Classes Taught by Bibi Amirunnessa Khanam, Dacca.

Serial No.	Name Of Centre	Name of the Head of the Household	Days of Visits	Working Hours	Number on the Roll	Ladies	Girls under Eleven Years	Remarks of S. Das, Assistant Inspectress of Schools, Dhaka
1.	Bangshi Bazar	Maulvi Nejabut Ali Khan	Monday Thursday	11:30 am to 1:30 pm	10	08	02	A good Mahomedan centre; opened on the 14th of March, 1910.
2.	Fulbaria	Chand Mistri	Monday Thursday	2 pm to 4 pm	06	06	00	Opened on the 18th of January, 1909. The progress is very slow. The women here are rather slow in understanding. The number has also gone down.
3.	Badamtali	Bibi Munzura Banu	Tuesday Friday	11:30 am to 1:30 pm	10	08	02	Opened on the 15th of August, 1910. Work fair.
4.	Babur Bazar	Maulvi Asad Bakht	Tuesday Friday	1:40 pm to 3:40 pm	09	06	03	Opened on the 5th of August. A fairly good centre.
5.	Mahuttuli	Maulvi Munsur Ali	Wednesday Saturday	11:30 am to 1:30 pm	12	08	04	A good centre. The ladies are intelligent and very willing to work. Opened on the 19th of February, 1910
6.	Begum Bazar	Mirza Mohammed Kasim Shiraji	Wednesday Saturday	2 am to 4 pm	10 57	06 42	04 15	Good and promising centre. Opened on the 10th of December, 1910.

Source: Compiled from the *Report on Work of Zenana Governesses Up To Date*, Assam Secretariat (Sylhet Proceedings), Education Department (A) Proceedings, Bundle 3, Serial 75, List 4, Jan.-Dec., 1910-1916, File No. E/946 of 1909, Nos. 1-8, National Archives of Bangladesh.

Table 1.2: Statement of More Zenana Classes Taught by Bibi Amirunnessa Khanam, Dacca.

Serial No.	Name Of Centre	Name of the Head of the Household	Days of Visits	Working Hours	Number on the Roll	Ladies	Girls under Eleven Years	Remarks of S. Das, Assistant Inspectress of Schools, Dhaka
1.	Agasadag Bazar	Maulvi Wares Ali	Monday Thursday	11 am to 1 pm	10	10	00	Opened in January, 1910. Very poor. Progress is very slow.
2.	Jindabahar Lane	Maulvi Dadan Miah	Monday Thursday	1:30 pm to 3:30 pm	18	18	00	Opened in August, 1910. Fair.
3.	Asadzamadar's Lane	Doctor Nawabali	Tuesday Friday	11 am to 1 pm	08	08	00	Opened on the 11th of February, 1911. A promising centre.
4.	Lakshmi Bazar	Haji Amiruddin	Tuesday Friday	1:30 pm to 3:30 pm	12	10	02	Opened in April, 1910. Very backward.
5.	Alluki Bazar	Abdul Razzak Khondaker	Wednesday Saturday	11 am to 1 pm	09	06	03	Opened on the 23rd of February, 1911. Entirely new centre.
6.	Urdu Bazar	Munshi Abdul Mallik	Wednesday Saturday	1:30 am to 3:30 pm	10 67	10 62	00 05	Opened on the 1st of April, 1911.

Source: Compiled from the *Report on Work of Zenana Governesses Up To Date*, Assam Secretariat (Sylhet Proceedings), Education Department (A) Proceedings, Bundle 3, Serial 75, List 4, Jan.-Dec., 1910-1916, File No. E/946 of 1909, Nos. 1-8, National Archives of Bangladesh.

Table 1.3: Statement of Hindu Zenana Home Classes Taught by Miss Suniti Chatterjee, Dacca.

Serial No.	Name Of Centre	Name of the Head of the Household	Days of Visits	Working Hours	Number on the Roll	Ladies	Girls under Eleven Years	Remarks of S. Das, Assistant Inspectress of Schools, Dhaka
1.	Bairagitola	Babu Piyari Lal Das, B.L.	Monday Thursday	1 pm to 3 pm 3:10 to 5:10 pm	14	14	00	This centre opened on the 6th of July, 1908. The ladies here have shown a great improvement since the opening of the centre.
2.	Sutrapur	Babu Jagendra Nath Das	Monday Thursday	2:10 pm to 5:10 pm 1 pm to 3 pm	11	10	01	A fairly good centre; opened on the 11th of June, 1909.
3.	Shankharibazar	Babu Ashutosh Dhar	Tuesday Friday	1 pm to 3 pm 3:15 pm to 5:15 pm	15	14	01	This is the oldest centre started on the 26th of March, 1907. The ladies of this house are very keen on female education and have shown their eagerness to learn by continuing the centre for so long.
4.	Benianagar	Babu Nagendra Chandra Das	Tuesday Friday	3:15 pm to 5:15 pm 1 pm to 3 pm	17	17	00	Opened on the 3rd of August, 1910. A good number being educated here; the ladies are making fair progress.
5.	Malakartola	Babu Rajani Kumar Das	Wednesday Saturday	1 pm to 3 pm 3:10 to 5:10 pm	17	16	01	Opened on the 2nd of March, 1910. A good centre and the work is going on satisfactorily.
6.	Farashganj	Babu Basanta Kumar Das	Wednesday Saturday	3:10 to 5:10 pm 1 pm to 3 pm	05 79	01 72	00 03	Opened on the 11th of December, 1909. It was in a satisfactory condition, but lately the number has fallen down and the work is not regular either.

Source: Compiled from the *Report on Work of Zenana Governesses Up To Date*, Assam Secretariat (Sylhet Proceedings), Education Department (A) Proceedings, Bundle 3, Serial 75, List 4, Jan.-Dec., 1910-1916, File No. E/946 of 1909, Nos. 1-8, National Archives of Bangladesh.

Table 1.4: Statement of Hindu and Muslim Zenana Home Classes, Dacca, Taught by Miss Giribala Biswas under the Supervision of Baptist Zenana Mission.

Serial No.	Name Of Centre	Name of the Head of the Household	Days of Visits	Working Hours	Number on the Roll	Ladies	Girls under Eleven Years	Remarks of S. Das, Assistant Inspectress of Schools, Dhaka
1.	Farashganj	Babu Mahabharat Sarkar	Monday Thursday	12 pm to 2 pm	12	09	03	A fairly good centre; the pupils are attentive and willing to learn. It was opened on the 5th of September, 1910.
2.	Kaparianagar	Babu Bepin Behari Roy	Monday Thursday	2:10 pm to 4:10 pm	14	12	02	Good; opened on the 21st of July, 1910.
3.	Nalgola	Babu Amar Chand Laha	Tuesday Friday	12 pm to 2 pm	11	10	01	There are two Muslim ladies here. It had made good progress in a year and a half. Opened on the 2nd of July, 1909.
4.	Kahottuli	Babu Srikanta Chanda	Tuesday Friday	2:30 pm to 4:30 pm	17	16	01	One of the best centres; the ladies here are quite advanced. Opened on 2nd July, 1909.
5.	Becharam's Deury	Maulvi Mujibar Rahman	Wednesday Saturday	11 am to 1 pm	09	05	04	A good Mahomedan centre. Opened on 22nd December, 1909.
6.	Dal Bazar	Babu Basanta Kumar Das	Wednesday Saturday	2 pm to 4 pm	17 80	16 68	01 12	Very good centre; opened on 8th August, 1909.

Source: Compiled from the *Report on Work of Zenana Governesses Up To Date*, Assam Secretariat (Sylhet Proceedings), Education Department (A) Proceedings, Bundle 3, Serial 75, List 4, Jan.-Dec., 1910-1916, File No. E/946 of 1909, Nos. 1-8, National Archives of Bangladesh.

Table 1.5: Statement of Zenana Home Classes Taught by Fayajarennesa Khatun, 1909, Dacca.

Serial No.	Name Of Centre	Name of the Head of the Household	Days and Hours of Visits	Number on the Roll	Remarks of M.E.A. Garret, Inspectress of Schools, Dacca
1.	Roy Shaheb Bazar	Kamal Khansama	Monday and Friday 12 noon to 2: 15 pm	11	It is a new centre. The ages of the pupils vary from 5 to 45 years. All are just beginning the Bengali alphabet. They are very bright and eager.
2.	Rokanpur	Abdul Rauf	Monday and Friday 2:30 pm to 4:30 pm	09	Some pupils here are quite young and should attend school. Two older pupils need a better teacher than the present governess.
3.	Becharam's Deury	Maulvi Mazamar Rahman	Tuesday and Thursday 1 pm to 3 pm	06	Three little girls here are learning their letters while three older pupils can read some Bengali and Urdu.
4.	Narandia	Ramzan Ali Bhuiya	Tuesday and Thursday 7 am to 9 am	06	This is a new centre. The class is held in the governess's own house.
5.	Bangsal	Hazi Abdul Rashid	Wednesday and Saturday 12 noon to 2:15 pm	08	The two daughters of the house have been educated by their parents a little. The teacher of a neighbouring Maktab attends the class in order to learn Bengali. Some little girls are learning both Bengali and Urdu.
6.	Makim Bazar	Maulvi Abdul Hakim	Wednesday and Saturday 2:30 pm to 4:30 pm	06	There is no very special eagerness amongst the pupils of this class. Three have been taught the Koran. Both Bengali and Hindustani have been attempted.

Source: Compiled from the *Report on Work of Zenana Governesses Up To Date*, Assam Secretariat (Sylhet Proceedings), Education Department (A) Proceedings, Bundle 3, Serial 75, List 4, Jan.-Dec., 1910-1916, File No. E/946 of 1909, Nos. 1-8, National Archives of Bangladesh.

As an attempt to further facilitate the spread of zenana education, and add stimulus to it, the Government of Bengal agreed to the Director of Public Instruction Alexander Pedlar's proposal of modifying the rules and regulations of the scholarship funds for girls in favor of the zenana pupils. Because of the custom of early marriage, girls would end up getting married off any time between the ages of nine to fourteen and invariably would have to drop out of school after marriage. According to the rules, a girl who had obtained a Primary or a Middle scholarship, had to forfeit the scholarship if she continued her studies in the zenana instead of attending a formal institution. As a sure sign of the government's sincere wishes to strengthen the work of zenana education, the following relaxation to the rules was made:

"If a Hindu or Muhammadan girl obtains a Primary or a Middle scholarship and is unable to attend any recognized school, owing to the custom of the country, or of the particular class to which she belongs, or to distance from a suitable school, the scholarship due to her should not be paid to her month by month. If, however, before the expiration of the period for which the scholarship is to be held, the girl pupil in question submits to an examination by an Inspectress of Schools, or by a female teacher for zenana education, or by an Inspector of Schools, or even by a Deputy Inspector of Schools and is found on such examination to have attained the desired higher stage of education, then the scholarship money may be paid to her as a prize."[68]

The relaxing of scholarship rules provided much incentive for the zenana education system and proved Government's favorable attitude towards it. The system, by the beginning of the 20th century, had established itself as a parallel mode of institutional education. After Bengal was partitioned in 1905, Government took the unprecedented move of holding a public opinion poll by circulating a questionnaire consisting of twenty-four questions among one hundred and nine civilians including some Government officials and subsequently forming a Female Education Committee to make recommendations for reform measures on the basis of those opinions. Six of those twenty-four questions were concerned with the zenana education scheme. The complete

[68] Government of Bengal, General Department, Education Branch, From L.S.S. O'Malley, Esq., Under-Secretary to Government of Bengal, to DPI, Bengal, Proceedings 84, June 1904, File 2-S/9-2. West Bengal State Archives.

questionnaire has been discussed in Chapter 3. Here we may present the responses regarding zenana education.

In Search of Ways to Redesign the Zenana:

The attitude of the respondents was generally favorable to both the zenana education scheme and formal schooling for girls. Question numbers 3 to 7 and question no. 14 was directed towards zenana education and the unanimous opinion of all the respondents were positively for continuation of the system.[69] The newly introduced Central Gathering Scheme gained the stamp of public approval through positive replies to question no. 3. It had asked whether it was possible to have small centers in each *mahallah* (meaning area) or in private houses where the girls of that *mahallah* or family may meet to receive instruction from a peripatetic governess. The respondents generally believed that such an arrangement, while being acceptable to all the communities, suited the Muslim community best. In fact, some Education Department officers thought that the peripatetic mode was the only way to spread education among Muslim girls.[70] There were six missionaries among the respondents and each of them insisted on restricting zenana centers to married girls only. Supporting the view of the missionaries that formal schools should be the ultimate institution girls should be attending, F.C. Henniker, Officiating Commissioner of Rajshahi, raised the valid question of whether guardians of girls would object to their wards going to the private house of another person.[71] The Commissioner of Chittagong Mr. H. Luson and the Magistrate of Bogra Mr. J.N. Gupta supported the view of Mr. Henniker adding that the instruction in zenana centers must necessarily be somewhat perfunctory. Although the Magistrate of Tipperah (now Comilla) F.W. Strong thought that the expenses would be prohibitive, the majority of officers and private Hindu and Muslim citizens supported the Central Gathering System that question 3 referred to.

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[69] The issues raised by the questionnaire regarding zenana education have been extensively dealt with in Asha Islam Nayeem and Avril Powell, 'Redesigning the Zenana: Domestic Education in Eastern Bengal in the Early Twentieth Century' in Powell, Avril and Lambert-Hurley, Siobhan (eds.), *Rhetoric and Reality: Gender and the Colonial Experience in South Asia* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 50-81.

[70] Letter from Babu Joy Gopal De, Assistant Inspector of Schools, Dacca Division, to the Director of Public Instruction, Eastern Bengal and Assam, dated Dacca, the 15th September, 1907, Education A Proceedings, GEB, April 1908, No. 125, NA,B, p. 2.

[71] Ibid.

Question number 4 asked whether it was desirable to limit attendance in the private centers to girls of particular castes and classes. Many respondents thought that restrictions on the mixing of castes and classes and, for that matter, religious communities too should not be imposed just on *Mahallah* schools but on girls' schools in general.[72] The missionaries, however, considered the proposed restrictions unnecessary on the grounds that the schools that they ran did not face dearth of attendance due to a mixing of different creeds. All in all, 46 opinions were in favor and 52 opinions were opposed to any restrictions being imposed upon the admission of girls. The District Magistrate of Dacca Mr. B.C. Allen, with some British officers and and a section of private Muslim respondents strongly felt that Muslims would want their girls to be taught in zenana schools exclusively for the girls of that community and would even prefer to exclude girls of the lower classes. However, the District Sessions Judge of Rajshahi A. Majid, along with a few other Muslim gentlemen opposed the idea of segregation on the basis of caste and class.

To what extent private agency should be relied on and what the conditions of inspection should be was the fifth question asked. This question obviously arose out of the concern, on the one hand, of the need to judge the quality of the various local zenana agencies that had grown in the last two decades of the 19th century in response to the fear that the missionary ladies were using the privilege of access into the households of locals for conversion, and the new attempts of establishing greater Government control on the content of education on the other. Most of the responses were in favor of some reliance on the private agencies, missionary or non-missionary regarding management and the conducting of examinations. Having said that, the majority of the respondents expected Government to exercise control through proper supervision.

The zenana agencies of the various denominations of Protestant missions had been enjoying grants-in-aid from Government since the Hunter Commission of 1882 had recommended it. Now the question arose whether other private persons opening zenana centers in their homes should get financial benefit from Governement too through

[72] Ibid.

question number six which asked: 'Whether it would serve a useful purpose to give grants-in-aid to persons who open schools under proper guarantee as to enrolment and attendance?' The only condition attached in this question was the clause of the physical presence of pupils in such informal schools. With the exception of a small number of Civil and Education Department officers, all were in favor of expanding grant-in-aid for private initiatives. The few objections that arose were related to the concerns about financial fraud. There had been instances of phantom schools where students had been gathered for the benefit of inspection and then they had dispersed immediately after the inspectors left the spot.[73] Some British officers' skepticism about the intention of the locals went to the extent of commenting, albeit completely wrongly, that no Government exercise would serve any purpose at all because there was no tradition at all in this country to open schools for girls by private initiative.[74] While some, like the Headmaster of Dinajpur School Babu Harimohan Singh demanded that the entire cost be borne by Government, others like Babu Nagendra Kumar Roy, Secretary of Vidhyabinodini Shabha, Chittagong, thought that the rules for grant-in-aid should be very liberal, departmental interference left to the minimum; and warned that if the grant-in-aid was nothing more than a pittance, as was the case with several boys' schools, competent people would not be attracted to contribute to the cause. Nevertheless, it was the opinion of the majority that Government should aid private zenana agencies provided proper inspection is there.

As seen earlier, Government had already made the provision of transferring the scholarship of a girl who had obtained it but was unable to attend a formal school, to enjoy it in the form of prize money by studying at home and submitting to an examination held either by an Inspector or by a zenana teacher. Yet again this was raised by question no. 7 along with some other fund-related issues, asking whether scholarships may be given to girls who study at home and do not attend any school, and, if so, what standard, for example, Lower Primary or Upper Primary, they should pass, and what

[73] See Asha Islam Nayeem and Avril Powell, 'Redesigning the Zenana: Domestic Education in Eastern Bengal in the Early Twentieth Century' in Powell and Lambert-Hurley (eds.), *Rhetoric and Reality* (2006), p. 66.
[74] Ibid., p. 67.

amount they should get. Ninety-six out of one hundred and nine respondents were in favor of giving scholarships to girls who study at home and pass Departmental Examinations.[75] The thirteen who were against it were of the opinion that the condition in most homes were not favorable for private study. The missionaries, like before, insisted that the privilege of competing for Government scholarships should be confined to married women only, reiterating their belief that little girls should not study in the confines of the home but be in the open environment of formal schools. As to the amount of scholarship to be awarded, opinions varied widely from Rs. 1 to Rs. 10 per month after passing the Lower Primary Examination, Rs. 3 to Rs. 15 after passing the Upper Primary Examination. Finally, in the deliberations of the Female Education Committee, the recommended value of Primary Scholarships were Rs. 3 per month; Middle Vernacular Scholarships were Rs. 4 per month, and Middle English Scholarships were valued at Rs. 5 per month.[76]

Question no. 14 was a most pertinent one as it asked in what way peripatetic governesses could be recruited and how best could they be educated and trained. The dearth of appropriate teachers, trained or untrained was a perennial problem throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Dr. P. Chatterjee, a physician and Inspector of Schools on Special Duty and some other gentlemen thought that peripatetic governesses could be recruited from the Christian and Brahmo communities only, as those were the two communities who had begun the movement for educating girls from the second half of the nineteenth century and thus could draw from a pool of second generation educated women in the first quarter of the twentieth century. Some Hindu and Muslim gentlemen proposed that should liberal stipends be offered, widows and married women of respectable families of their communities could be trained as peripatetic governesses by European ladies or some member of their own family. There were recommendations for setting up a Normal School for training peripatetic teachers which was led to the opening of training classes for teachers at the Eden Female School in the evenings.

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[75] Op.Cit., p. 2.

[76] 'Recommendations of the Female Education Committee, June 1911', File no. E/25/E, *Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Department (A) Proceedings*, January 1912, Nos. 53-56, NA, B., p.3.

The Decline and End of the System of Zenana Education:

Although prospects for the system of zenana education were looking bright in the first decade of the twentieth century, it quickly began to decline by the second decade and was completely abandoned by the third decade of the century. There were some very pertinent factors that caused a decline in the missionary efforts of pursuing proselytizing through the institution of zenana education. The First World War (1914-18) seriously crippled the resources of the Missions. The chief resource for continuing zenana missions in India were the constant flow of women joining the Church as eager missionaries who are ready to go to great lengths to spread the Gospel. But the war effort needed at the factories and fields at home in England. Women no longer had to look towards the Church as the means of gainful employment. When the War ended, the past had changed forever. Nothing was the same ever again.

The Christian missionary organization had lost a lot of their earlier support from the natives during the Hindu revivalist movement which had begun in the 1870s and 1880s, eventually culminating into the nationalist struggle for independence during the first half of the twentieth century. The missionaries had to give up, in the face of strong resistance, targeting the upper segment of society and turned to evangelical work in the poorer segments of society instead. There, zenana education had never been an option as the lower classes neither could afford the luxury of home education, nor did they deem it necessary for their daughters to have an education in the first place. On the other hand, one of the main reasons behind the institutionalization of zenana education had been the social restrictions that required upper class girls to remain at home and in purdah. But by the 1870s, the attitude towards missionaries began to sour. Local newspapers and periodicals published articles condemning the proselytizing methods of the missionaries. *Dacca Prakash,* an influential weekly paper, regretted that while sewing and English language were the two good things that the British ladies could teach, their wish to convert the ladies of Bengal was what turned the locals against them.[77]

[77] *Dacca Prokash,* Editorial for May 21, 1870.

The spread of modernist ideas and the coming to age of the second generation of English-educated Bengali men and a few women weakened the purdah system also. Anti-British political agitation in Calcutta had its spill-over in Eastern Bengal. Women all over India were coming out of seclusion and Eastern Bengal was no exception. With the removal of the most tenacious justification for zenana education, its appeal diminished.

The quality of education imparted by the zenana teachers had always come under fire from Inspectresses.[78] They were found to be lacking in proper qualifications to teach. Equally deplorable was the fact that the great majority of the pupils did not have any preliminary instructions in schools. Therefore, the time given by the peripatetic teachers to each house which amounted to not more than two hours a week was painfully inadequate, as those two hours would also include devoting time to Bible stories and needlework. As observed by A.W. Croft, Director of Public Instruction, in the Annual Report on Education for 1877-78, much of the unfavorable results appeared to be due to pressure created on the missions from home to show increasing numbers under instruction year by year.[79] The same report also stresses that because Christian missionary societies were receiving government aid, the ability of the teachers must be guaranteed. The teachers must subject themselves to examinations and obtain "certificates of fitness" before beginning work. A.W. Croft further suggested that to test the work of these certified teachers, their pupils must be examined and Government grants to the missions must be rated on the basis of the result of those examinations.[80] Such recommendations, however, were never seriously entertained. As the demand for teachers always exceeded the supply, such lofty ideas of maintaining high standards of education in the zenana remained as rhetoric only.

By the second decade of the twentieth century, women had crossed an important threshold to venture into tertiary education. Social acceptance and recognition of the fact

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[78] The Inspectress of Schools Mrs. Monmohini Wheeler expressed dissatisfaction about the condition of zenana education in Dacca, Tipperah, Backergunge and Furredpore, as well as Calcutta. Annual Report on Education for 1877-78, Bengal Education (A) Proceedings, General Department, Government of Bengal, 1878.

[79] *Ibid.*, p. 12, paragraph 31.

[80] *Ibid.*

that women are to be educated drove more and more women towards proper institutional education which rendered more satisfactory and fruitful results.

Finally, once prejudice against girls attending schools diminished considerably, institutional education proved much cheaper than peripatetic teaching. Official records abounded with reports about what a drain on the education budget zenana education was.

In 1933 the curtain finally fell on an experiment with female education initiated by the Christian missionaries and supported by the colonial government that lasted more than half a century. The experiment was called Zenana Education in government official education records and missionary papers. In the second half of the nineteenth century there had arisen the Bengali counterpart of the missionary zenana education scheme which was the *Antahpur Stri* Siksa, run by the native *bhadralok* class. In 1933 the government declared the Zenana Education scheme officially closed and reallocated the scheme's funds to other projects. By that time social and political changes hand rendered the zenana education system ineffective and unpopular. While the Bengal Legislative Assembly cited reports of the inefficacy and inefficiency of the system as the reason why it should be discontinued, even as late as 1913-14 reports stated that in Bengal the work of the zenana agencies is considered to be "full of promise".[81] At the end of the period under discussion, in 1921, in the whole of Bengal, there were 61 zenana teachers with 1,262 pupils.[82] Some of the zenana classes in Eastern Bengal suffered considerably owing to constant change of centres.[83] The work was also hampered by the ever increasing cost of conveyance. The zenana scheme was, from the perspective of all parties involved, quite expensive.

The high water mark of the zenana education system had been achieved by 1901, when, at the Simla Education Conference held in that year, the system was praised and policies were formulated thereafter to further expand its activities. Before that, The

[81] Government of India, Department of Education, *Indian Education in 1913-14*, (Calcutta: superintendent Government Printing, 1915).
[82] *Report on Public Instruction in Bengal for 1920-1921*, Calcutta: The Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, 1922.
[83] *Ibid.*

Education Commission of 1882, popularly known as the Hunter Commission, noted that zenana teaching by missionary agency was the most successful means of educating Indian women after they were taken out of school. An important aspect of the zenana work was not just the imparting of English language knowledge along with some education. One of the values of zenana work was the free exchange of views between the teacher and the zenana who never went out of the house. The peripatetic teacher, be she an English Christian missionary or local teacher, was the window to the outside world for the *purdanishin* lady, a great many of whom never set foot outside their homes.

The zenana education system had been thought of as expensive from the beginning, when white missionary women began it. When under the operation of the constitution of 1919 education was transferred from the central government to the provincial government, and the system had to be maintained from the provincial revenue, it at all, its cost-effectiveness came into question. Levying taxes for allocating enough money for the zenana schools became increasingly difficult for the elected ministries. The enactment of the Free Primary Education Bill of 1929 and the Communal Award of 1932, and, most importantly, the virtual breaking up of the *purdah* system since the political upheaval of the 1920s made the zenana education scheme an anachronism in the system of modern institutionalized education, and hence it was abolished in 1933.[84]

With the abolition of the zenana education system which was running parallel to the institutional form of education for girls, a significant break with the past in the indigenous pedagogic structure was consciously performed. The systematic exclusion of women from mainstream academia came to a slow but definite end by the first half of the twentieth century. In the following chapter we seek to understand the phenomenon of the enforced lack of female education for centuries and see how the shackles of denied access to knowledge were broken.

[84] 'Report of the Committee to Advise on the Policy of Advancing Muslim Education in Bengal,' Calcutta Gazette, 1935.

Chapter 2

From Indigenous Form to Western Model: Rise of Institutions for Women

The pertinent questions posed by women's historians who study their underdevelopment is: how did women, who had been essential and central to creating social wealth end up becoming marginalized in the very society they helped to create, and, how did they get systematically excluded from the enterprise of the production of knowledge and owning material resources? The historian Gerda Lerner analyses the phenomenon of the deprivation of women from educational institutions, throughout history, in every known society, the condition of 'trained ignorance' of women.[1] The main argument Lerner puts forward is that women's exclusion from academia resulted logically from the lack of any purpose for women to be educated. Institutional education developed, Lerner shows, when men in power needed a group to serve to maintain and perpetuate their interests in the military, religious and political arenas. Women, as occupants of the domestic space, eventually became disadvantaged as a group through exclusion from the public space.

Supportive evidence for Gerda Lerner's theory of exclusion and its relevance to Bengal can be found in tracing the trajectories of educational institutions in this region. In a book on the history of education in India and Pakistan from ancient to modern times, F.E. Keay maps out four ways in which educational institutions came to be formed here.[2] Among the four ways believed to be the genesis of educational institutions, Keay attributes the first one to the custom of idol worship. Throughout the rural landscape of Bengal, there were, in every village, Hindu deities and a Brahmin priest for their worship.

[1] Lerner, Gerda, *The Creation of Feminist Consciousness: From the Middle Ages to Eighteen-seventy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 10. Gerda Lerner's *magnum opus* is a study titled *Women and History* in 2 volumes. Volume 1 deals with the historical origin and cause of women's subordination in society and is titled *The Creation of Patriarchy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986). The second volume, *The Creation of Feminist Consciousness*, deals with the growth of women's awareness of deprivation within the structure of patriarchal hegemony in Europe and America.

[2] Keay, F.E., *A History of Education in India and Pakistan*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959), pp. 169-171.

This Brahmin, in addition to offering worship to the idols on behalf of all the different castes of the village people, was obliged to tutelage those children of the village whose parents wanted their offspring to acquire letters, and that would usually be male offspring of well-to-do villagers. This was the origin of the indigenous *pathshala* and *tol* system.[3] In the same manner, after the spread of Islam in Bengal, the village mosque would have, attached to it, a madrassah and a *maktab*, where Muslim boys would come to learn to read the *Koran*. The second way indigenous schools originated, according to Keay, was through the initiative of the village landlord who wanted his own children to acquire literacy and did not mind if other children of the village took advantage of his patronage. In most cases, he would appoint a teacher who would be housed under his roof and the school would meet on the verandah of his house or in some other place that belonged to him. The third way involved an entrepreneurial person who would start it as a commercial venture. Such a venture would normally be commercially viable in urban centres where trade, commerce and other economic activities took place. Such activities would ideally require knowledge of reading, writing and arithmetic. Such schools would normally accommodate students of all castes and religions. The fourth way that indigenous educational institutions originated were the ones set up by traders who would get together and employ a teacher to teach their sons writing and keeping accounts, so as to prepare them to take up the family business. These were sometimes called *Mahajani* schools. Neither in the rural setting, nor in the urban, do we see any real wish to educate girls in any of the above mentioned schools, as there was no perceived economic benefit from educating girls. In saying this, however, we must be aware that the women of the working classes were always contributing to the family income through menial work in the field, in the small home industries, in small businesses and in the market. When we talk about the dearth of professions, it is the privileged daughters and wives of the aristocratic class who face the compulsions of maintaining *purdah* and family dignity. For this class the most important agency in the transfer of knowledge, culture and tradition was not formal institutions of instruction, but the family. Through socialization

[3] For a more detailed study into the indigenous *pathsala* education system and how it was replaced by institutions based on the western model of education, see Shahidullah, K., *Patshalas into Schools: The development of indigenous elementary education in Bengal, 1854-1905* (Calcutta: Firma KLM Private Limited, 1987).

with the many tiers of relations within the patrilineal structure of extended kinship: grandfathers, grandmothers, uncles, aunts, cousins, siblings, along with the hierarchy of servants --- attitudes, patterns of behavior, norms, manners and morals were learnt. From plain sewing to the most exquisite embroidery lace-making; from cooking everyday ordinary food to the preparation of a myriad of pickles and preserves and sweets and other delectable items; from the intricate details of every religious ritual to the mastering of social deportment – everything was taught to the female child in preparation of her destined vocation as wife and mother. Before the birth of a Froebel or a Montessori, Begum Shaista Ikramullah describes in *Behind the Veil*, how little girls learned through what in the modern education system is called the "project method."[4] The method of social learning described by Ikramullah is vivid:

> "They learned cooking by doing play-cooking known as *hund-kulia*, and learned all that was to be learned of household management and the intricate social etiquette by playing with dolls. Mothers and aunts realized the educational value of such play and encouraged, advised and supervised it. Dolls' marriages were arranged in which girls imitated, in the minutest details, all the ceremonies, and observed all the customs attendant on a real wedding. Any omission or solecism was commented upon by their elders: in this manner the girls learned what was expected from them in the all-important role of a hostess."[5]

The lack of a purpose for educating girls slowly began to vanish in Bengal in the nineteenth century when the first generation of English-educated men set out to reform society. That is when the woman's question came up, as they realized that home was the place where reform had to begin. When they could perceive the wife as companion rather than the vehicle for procreation and reproduction, the moral purpose for educating them was established. The growth of organizations followed in quick succession. When social reformers came to believe that having an educated wife at home would mean that the home would, to express in Gail Minault's compelling words, "... become a haven (or better still, an oasis), so that men would not be tempted to find their companionship

[4] Ikramullah, Shaista, *Behind the Veil* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992. First published by Pakistan Publications, 1953), p. 113.
[5] Ibid., pp. 113-114.

elsewhere – with courtesans for instance"[6], the social barriers against the spread of female education began to loosen up. The reformers further hoped that, "if middle-class women were literate and cultivated – traditionally a role reserved for courtesans – men would be saved from the dissolute life, and the expense that went along with it."[7] It might be relevant here to mention that, in a nineteenth century instruction manual for use in girls' schools, one of the instructions in the 'Housewifery' section on 'Guiding Principles to Ensure Health and Happiness', instructs girls to "Provide recreations and amusements in the home so that the members of the family may be made happy and kept from seeking their pleasures in *questionable places* (emphasis added)." [8]

Thus, social reformers in both nineteenth century England and India considered having an educated wife in the home to be a prerequisite to curtailing debauchery, if that what 'pleasures in questionable places' indicates. Along with the responsibility of preserving traditional culture in the face of colonialism and imperialism, now it fell on the women's shoulders to restrain their men from seeking pleasure from outside the house.[9] This reforming spirit of the educated men, as they challenged the *nawabi* lifestyle, echoed to some extent the 'civilizing mission' of the British imperial rulers, the justification they used for ruling India.

At the height of the social movement of Bengal widely known as the 'Bengal Renaissance', the women's question became an integral part of social reorganization as all economic and political relations were being renegotiated and reshaped in the colonial environment. The demand for institutionally trained educated women was generated by the changes occurring in the family structure of the newly arising professional class who were employed in the colonial service. The joint family structure was breaking up as wives began to accompany their husbands to wherever their husbands would be stationed,

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[6] Amin, Sonia Nishat, *The World of Muslim Women in Colonial Bengal, 1876-1939* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996), p. 48.
[7] *Ibid.*, p. 48.
[8] Beddoe, Deidre, *Discovering women's history: A practical manual* (London: Pandora Press, 1983), p. 101.
[9] This thesis is also elaborated in Rahman, Bilkis, *Unish Shatake Madhyabitya Paribare Nari-Purush Samparka* [Men-Women Relations in Middle Class Families in Nineteenth Century Bengal], Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, The University of Dhaka, 2011.

far away from home, and would thus be required to raise a family and run a household without the guiding hands of a host of female relatives of various ages in that were readily available in the 'traditional'[10] joint family system. But more important was the creation of the generation of Western-educated males whose changing ideas regarding what an ideal family should be demanded the companionship of an educated wife. The transition involved the concerted effort and patronage of three categories of entrepreneurial groups: the Christian missionaries, government agency, and indigenous effort which also include the agency of women themselves. A discussion on these three catalysts follows.

The Missionary Enterprise

Christian missionary enterprise was the first catalyst in establishing formal schools for girls in the first half of the nineteenth century. Resorting to educational activities was a strategy born out of necessity for the Christian missionaries as attempts at proselytization was not as rewarding in India as it was in Africa. In India the missionaries were up against an ancient civilization and deep rooted religious and cultural traditions. Here a few missionaries preaching on the streets or under a tree on the wayside, distributing Bibles translated into the vernacular would not be able to make any dent into the belief systems that dated back thousands of years. The few conversions that had been achieved were from the poorest of the poor among the lowest caste and class. The early schools established by the Serampore missionaries could also count among its students girls and boys from the downtrodden sections of society. There had not been much to impress the home committees with for all the hard work the missionaries were doing. But things began to change from the 1830s onwards, after the arrival of Alexander Duff of the Free Church of Scotland, who came to Calcutta in 1830.

[10] Tapan Raychaudhuri argues that, historically, the 'tradition' of the joint family structure is not that old an institution. Rather, he says, contrary to popular knowledge, extensive research shows the striking fact of the absence of the joint family before the mid-eighteenth century in Bengal. The history of the joint family, however, is beyond the purview of this study. For details, see, Tapan Raychaudhuri, 'Norms of Family Life and Personal Morality among the Bengali Hindu Elite, 1600-1850', in Baumer, Rachel Van M. (ed.), *Aspects of Bengali History and Society* (Hawaii: The University Press of Hawaii, 1975), Asian Studies at Hawaii, No. 12, pp. 13-25.

Alexander Duff was ordained in August of 1829 and was immediately chosen as the first missionary of the Scottish Presbyterian Free Church of Scotland.[11] Setting sail for India in October of 1829, seven months and two ship-wrecks later, and losing at sea the eight hundred books that he had had with him, Duff reached Calcutta in May, 1830, at the age of twenty-four, with his newly-wed wife Anne Scott Drysdale of Edinburgh. For the next thirty-six years, till he left Calcutta for the last time in 1863, Duff labored, at the expense of deteriorating health conditions and separation from his four children[12], to firmly establish the concept of the 'educational mission'[13] not just in the Scottish mission, but in all other missions of every denomination working in India. The spread of Western knowledge and values was the most effective tool of proselytization because Western education was "inseparable from the Christian faith and its doctrines, precepts and evidence", held Duff.[14] Opening schools was seen as the most viable option of gaining access to people. School-houses served the dual purpose of social intercourse with different classes of people and of religious worship. In addition to that, the missionaries firmly believed in the power of education for opening up the minds of young Indians to the tenets of Christianity. In this connection Duff emphasized the importance of female education. Opening schools for girls was a priority for the missionaries as they had rightly assessed that, "...it was with Indian women that the opportunity of success lay both in so far as they were responsible for future generations, and in that they presented a major site of resistance to male conversion."[15]

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[11] For a full account of Duff's life and work, see Paton, William, *Alexander Duff: Pioneer of Missionary Education* (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1922).

[12] They were sent back to Scotland, as was the custom then, to send the children of Company and later Raj officials back home so that they could grow up in the 'proper' cultural environment.

[13] See Fuchs, Antje Linkenbach, 'Education and the Process of Nation Building in Pre-Independence India: Some Theoretical Reflections', in Krishna Kumar and Joachim Oesterheld (eds.), *Education and Social Change in South Asia* (New Delhi: Orient Longman Private Limited, 2007), pp. 129-155. Also see, Chattopadhyay, Dilip Kumar, *Dynamics of Social Change in Bengal, 1817-1851* (Calcutta: Punthi Pustak, 1990), p. 36.

[14] Cited in Ghosh, Suresh Chandra, *The History of Education in Modern India, 1757-1998* (New Delhi: Orient Longman Limited, revised and updated edition, 2000), p. 25.

[15] Weitbrecht, Mrs. (c. 1878), *The Women of India and Zenana and Educational Work among them,* (London: Indian Female Normal School and Instruction), cited in, Janet Price and Margrit Shildrick, 'Mapping the Colonial Body: Sexual Economies and the Sate in Colonial India', in Price, Janet and Shildrick, Margrit (eds.), *Feminist Theory and the Body: A Reader* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), p. 392.

The second half of the nineteenth century saw the expansion of missionary work in the zenana and in the health and nursing sector. Missionary propaganda about their rescuing mission of the downtrodden, denigrated Indian women complimented and justified the colonist's civilizing mission. A member of the Women's Auxiliary of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society wrote back home in 1880: "The daughters of India are unwelcomed at their birth, untaught in childhood, enslaved when married, accursed as widows and unlamented at their death."[16] Missionary journals of all denominations were replete with stories of the 'suffering eastern sisters' and how the path of Christianity, which they were bound to follow once they could be educated would alleviate that suffering. According to a missionary reporting in 1883, Indian women were:

> "...immured like caged birds, beating their tired wings against the prison walls vainly, yet eagerly longing to learn something of what is beyond, and to hear further of the faint whisper which has been borne in to them of a brighter life somewhere, they know not where."[17]

Such propaganda, while helping to recruit more and more women missionaries in the second half of the nineteenth century, also aided the imperial machinery in England by generating popular support for imperialism. Thus, the sword and the cross worked in tandem to increase their respective power/control over Indian society in general, by positing in discursive construction the victimization and oppression of its women.

Protestant missionary efforts had established the first educational institutions for girls in Eastern Bengal in the 1820s and when those institutions failed to bring upper class girls to school, the missionaries converted their enthusiasm into institutionalizing zenana or home education (discussed in the previous chapter) as an alternative to formal education. The proliferation of such missionary activity in India came as a result of the

[16] Ibid., p. 393.
[17] Warner-Ellis, H. (1883), *Our Eastern Sisters & Their Missionary Helpers* (London: Religious Tract Society), (Methodist Archives, John Rylands Archives, John Rylands Library, University of Manchester), cited in Price and Shildrick (eds.), *Feminist Theory and the Body*, p. 392.

success of the Evangelical Movement in England at the turn of the nineteenth century.[18] Missionary work at home and abroad was one of the main tenets of the movement. The Church Missionary Society (CMS) was formed in 1799 for that purpose. The British foreign missionary movement of the nineteenth century, however, was begun with the formation of the English Baptist Missionary Society in 1792, by William Carey who became its first missionary to India.[19] The Evangelicals, believing that missionary activity was much needed in Bengal because there was a great need among the Hindus for moral reform[20], were instrumental in adding the clause in the Charter Renewal Act that lifted all restrictions on the entry of missionaries in Company territory when the Charter of the East India Company came up for renewal in 1813.[21] It was this clause that brought to India Roman Catholic and Protestant missionaries of various denominations from England, Ireland and Scotland. The Charter Act of 1833 threw open India to missions from all over the world thus allowing missions from Canada and America to pour in. The period between 1833 and 1853 is classified as the 'age of mission schools and colleges' in British India.

The British Parliament was won over to the Evangelical cause by the two parliamentarians who were also prominent members of the Evangelical Party, Charles Grant, a member of the Court of Directors of the East India Company, and William Wilberforce, British politician, philanthropist, who had been converted to evangelical Christianity in 1784-85. Charles Grant believed that converting the subject people to Christianity would insure the permanence of British rule in India, and that English education would help the spread of Christianity. By introducing both, Grant argued, the practical purpose of creating a market for British manufacturers could be achieved, as the

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[18] The evangelical movement began within the Church of England in the 18th century from 16th-17th century Puritanism.

[19] Marshman, John Clark, *The Life and Times of Carey, Marshman, And Ward: Embracing the History of the Serampore Mission* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longmans, & Roberts, 1859, Reprinted by Council of Serampore College in 2005), vol. I, p. 16.

[20] Former governor-general John Shore, an Evangelical and President of the Foreign Bible Society, maintained that with proper missionary zeal, Hindus could be converted into Christians, "...since the Indian Muslims were once probably Hindus." *Memoir of the Life and Correspondence of John, Lord Teignmouth*, cited in Kopf, David, *British Orientalism and the Bengal Renaissance: The Dynamics of Indian Modernization, 1773-1835* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969, p. 141).

[21] The evangelicals were prominent in England during 1790-1830.

natives would become more industrious and thus help eliminate poverty.[22] Lack of contact opportunities with the people in general drove the missionaries to conclude, quite early on, that education was the best means of proselytization. That realization was most true when it came to proselytizing amongst women. To convert a Hindu or Muslim woman to Christianity was not a mean task, given that women were the repositories of culture, tradition, religion and rituals. It was only through providing educational services that the Christian missionaries could come into contact with large numbers of women and girls from the *bhadralok* class. Thus the Reverend St. Clair Donaldson at the Cambridge Brotherhood Mission listed four areas where missionary work could be effective: medical work, zenana work, the opening of schools, and work in the slums.

The earliest activities of the missionaries in Calcutta and its vicinity are well-known.[23] The first institution set up by Christian missions was founded in Calcutta by the Female Juvenile Society, an organ of the Baptist Mission, in 1819. The school, situated at Gouri Bere, Ultadanga, was named Female Juvenile School and education there was free of charge. The arrival in Calcutta of the zealous missionary Miss Mary Ann Cooke in 1821, under the auspices of the Church Missionary Society, and her marriage to the Reverend Isaac Wilson of the CMS allowed the Society to actively engage in founding free girls' schools in Calcutta. By 1823, just two years after her arrival, she had helped to set up fifteen girls' schools. The Church Missionary Society founded an organ called the Ladies' Society for Native Female Education in Calcutta and its Vicinity in 1824 and made Mary Ann Cooke (by now Mrs. Wilson) its Superintendent. By then there were twenty-four free girls' schools under CMS management which were handed over to be managed by the Ladies' Society. In Eastern Bengal also, it was the Christian missionaries

[22] Great Britain, *Parliamentary Papers*, Vol. X, Paper 282 (1812-1813), C. Grant, "Observations on the State of Society Among the Asiatic Subjects of Great Britain," cited in, Kopf, David, *British Orientalism and the Bengal Renaissance*, p. 143.

[23] Comprehensive works on this subject include Roy, Benoy Bhusan and Ray, Pranati, *Zenana Mission: The Role of Christian Missionaries for the Education of Women in 19th Century Bengal* (Delhi: Indian Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1998), Lahiri, Krishna, 'Education of Women in Bengal, 1849-1882, With Special Reference to Missionary Contributions', Ph.D. Thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 1979 (Michigan: University Microfilm International, Ann Arbor, U.S.A., 1985), Laird, M.A., *Missionaries and Education in Bengal, 1793-1837* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), and Potts, Daniel E., *British Baptist Missionaries in India, 1793-1837: The History of Serampore and its Missionaries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967).

who pioneered institutional education for girls. In the case of Eastern Bengal, we find the Serampore Mission to have set up the first girls' schools in Dacca, Chittagong and Jessore.

Among the three founders of the Serampore Mission, William Ward was most keen to take up the cause of female education as one of the responsibilities of the Mission.[24] On a fund-collecting trip to England in 1821, Mr. William Ward endeavored to draw public attention to the 'degraded condition of females in India' through public speeches and private conversations. Mr. Ward firmly believed that conversion to Christianity largely depended on a mother's ability to read the Bible to her child. Female ignorance and Christianity, he also believed, could not exist together. He was able to imprint upon the minds of his donors that the women of India were, "immured in the house in a state of complete seclusion from the healthful intercourse of society, debarred all access to knowledge, even that of the alphabet, and passed their lives in the frivolous tattle of the nursery."[25] While deploring the fact that the women of India were loaded with an 'intolerable burden' of ceremonial observances and subjected to the 'absolute control' of the family priest, Mr. Ward maintained that the deliverance of the female sex from the dominion of ignorance and superstition was essential to the national character.[26] On his return from England, Mr. Ward took the matter of female education into his own hands and began setting up girls schools in and around Serampore and branched out to Dacca, Chittagong and Jessore. For the running of these schools the Mission was dependent, on the one hand, on public support, and, on the other, on annual donations from philanthropists in England while for the management, the Mission depended on the wives of the missionaries.[27] Thus the first Christian missionary school to open in Dacca was the Christian Female School, run by Mrs. Charles Leonard, in 1824.[28]

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[24] Marshman, John Clark, *The Life And Times of Carey, Marshman, and Ward: Embracing the History of the Serampore Mission* (London: Council of Serampore College, 2005), vol. II, p. 303.
[25] *Ibid.*, p. 303.
[26] *Ibid.* p. 303.
[27] *Ibid.* p. 297.
[28] Missionary Intelligence for February, 1828, cited in Jogesh Chandra Bagal, *Women's Education in India: The First* Phase, (Calcutta: The World Press Private Ltd., 1956.) Tapati Basu has also given this date in '*Bangali Meyeder Lekhapara* (The Education of Bengali Girls) in Saradiya Anandabazar Patrika, 1398 (Bengali year).

Mrs. Charles Leonard's unfortunate death in 1826 dealt a severe blow to the Christian Female School and it had to be closed down. There had been eighteen children studying at that school. Two more schools of Dacca, one at Jumma-Kaal, and another at Ray Saheb Bazar, had to be discontinued. However, Mr. Charles Leonard, along with Mr. Domingo, strove to prevent the decline of the other girls' schools that had been set up by 1828. There were five other schools, one each, in Narandia, Ramgunj, Dayagunj, Jinjira, and Bunyanagar.[29] As of the Missionary Intelligence Report of February, 1828, the Narandia school had on its roll thirty-three little scholars. Nine of them were reading in the Conservations and Fables, and the rest were in alphabet and spelling lessons level. About twenty girls were reported to be in regular attendance. In the Ramganj school, the number of scholars on the roll was thirty-six, with about twenty in attendance. Twelve of the girls were reading easier books, while the rest were at the Elementary Tables stage. The Dayaganj school showed twenty-eight girls on its roll, with twenty of them attending regularly. Two of the children were reading scriptures, and seven were reading easier books. The rest were on Elementary Tables. The two schools, at Jinjira and Bunyanagar were relatively new, with twenty-four and sixteen students attending respectively.

Between the years 1824 and 1828, four free schools for girls were founded in Chittagong where the Serampore Mission had set up a station. The first formal school for girls was set up in Madaribari.[30] It appeared to be quite a flourishing one, with fifty girls recorded in the register and forty-five of them in regular attendance. The children attended four levels of classes. At the first two levels they read the spelling tables and took easy reading lessons in manuscript. At the third level they read the Fables. At the fourth level, they read Gospels and gave verbal explanations of what they read. Annual examinations were held in the presence of parents and relatives. Two other schools were established, one in Muradpur and the other in Bhuluadighi. The Muradpur school had seventeen students while the Bhuluadighi school was flourishing with thirty-two students.

[29] Missionary Intelligence Report of 1828, cited in Chatterjee, Sunil Kumar, *Hannah Marshman: The first woman missionary in India* (Hooghly: published by the author, 2006), p. 89.
[30] Missionary Intelligence Reports, cited in Bagal, *Women's Education in India: The First Phase* (Calcutta, 1956).

A fourth school was established in Baut-Dewan[31] with sixteen students but it had to be discontinued for reasons not disclosed in the Mission Reports.

Apart from the two important cities of Dacca and Chittagong, the only other district in Eastern Bengal where the Serampore Mission became the pioneer in running a missionary school for girls was Jessore. It so happened that the wife of the District Judge of Jessore, Mrs. H.M. Pigou, had set up a school for girls at her own expense around the year 1826 or 1827. There were fifteen students in the school, the running of which the Judge supervised himself. However, the Judge's job being a transferable one, Mr. and Mrs. Pigou were faced with the unfortunate circumstance of having to shut down the school as the Judge got transferred to another district. To save the school, the Judge requested the Serampore Mission to take charge of it, a request the Mission gladly agreed to.

By 1831 the Serampore Mission was running seven schools in Dacca with two hundred and nine students and five schools in Chittagong with one hundred and twenty-nine.[32] The Mission, however, was facing financial crises since the 1820s due to natural calamities and separation from the home committee.[33] The death of the founders of the Serampore Mission was an added factor to the decline of its activities. The girls' schools suffered the most in an atmosphere of general decline. Beginning from the 1840s, the missionaries preferred door to door peripatetic teaching, later institutionalized as the zenana education system as that gave them access to the wives and daughters of the upper echelon of society. However successful the zenana system may be though, opening formal schools, wherever possible, remained the method of choice for the missionaries. The Deputy Collector's reports of 1865 from the sleepy *mufassil* town of Magura in the western part of Eastern Bengal mention the active presence of the Baptist Mission there.[34] Under the auspices of the Christian Vernacular Education Society, the Baptist Mission

[31] This is the spelling used in the Missionary Intelligence Report.
[32] According to Mission Intelligence reports cited in Sunil Kumar Chatterjee, *Hannah Marshman, the First Woman Missionary in India* (Calcutta: S.K. Poddar, 1987), p. 78.
[33] *Ibid.* Also see, J.C. Marshman, *Life and Times of Carey, Marshman and Ward*, Vol. II.
[34] 'Extract from the Magoorah Deputy Collector's Annual Report for 1865-66,' No. 1, dated 3rd May, 1866, GOB, Education Branch, NA, B, period Jan. 1859-April 1868, List 18, Bundle 1, File 6.

was active in 'improving' existing village *Patshalas*. An agent of the Society regularly visited those local schools where girls also studied, taught lessons to convey the knowledge of 'Christian Truth' and supplied books to the pundits to 'enhance' the pupils' knowledge of a 'higher morality'. The school masters who were willing to come under the superintendence of the agents of the Society and use the books supplied to them received monthly and *anna* (one-sixteenth of a rupee) for each pupil.[35] The report mentions: "Female education is not entirely neglected. There is a female school in the station in connection with the Baptist Mission, but its operations are limited. Efforts will be made to extend them as opportunities offer."[36] Missionaries of the Welsh Presbyterian Church, from their base in Sylhet, extended their evangelical work to the Khasi and Jaintia Hills (a district of British India)[37] and established sixty-nine schools in the region, of which one was exclusively for females where fifteen girls were in attendance as of 1865.[38]. All the schools have been reported to be under the exclusive management of the Welsh Presbyterian Minister Mr. T. Jones. The quality of teaching, however, did not impress the Deputy Collector, as he comments: "I think greater attention should be given to the turning out of a few really good and efficient teachers in the first instance, rather than the collections of a large number of pupils at a great many different schools."[39] Then again, the Deputy Collector goes on to say:

> "I understand the object of the Missionaries to be *first*, to obtain the greatest influence over the greatest number of Cossyahs; *secondly*, to make this influence instrumental for the propagation of the Christian faith, and *thirdly*, but in the last place only, to inform that faith by secular instruction. Upon this view I think the measures taken by the Missionaries, are extremely well calculated to effect their object..."[40]

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[35] Ibid.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Occupying the central plateau between the valleys of the mighty river Brahmaputra and the Surma river and inhabited by tribal people, the Khasi Hills were annexed by the British in 1833, the Jaintia Hills in 1835.
[38] 'Report of the Commissioner of Dacca on the state of education in the Districts of his Division during the year 1865-66,' GOB, Education Department (A) Proceedings for February 1867, No. 8, NA, B.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid.

The attitude of the East India Company at the turn of the nineteenth century to idea of accommodating the missionaries was one of calculated indifference at the beginning; then, as the nineteenth century drew to an end, the colonial government and the Christian missions merged in partnership especially in the enterprise of female education. While in 1807 it was stated that, "Missionaries can do no mischief in India, if they are treated as formerly, neither encouraged nor oppressed. The true line for the British Government to pursue, is obvious: let missionaries make as many converts as they can, but give them no support on the one hand, or discouragement on the other",[41] by 1882, the official stance was that the missionaries were doing a very good job in India. However, missionary influence in the education sector weakened considerably within the last two decades of the nineteenth century when the xenophilia of early reformers was replaced by the xenophobia of the nationalists and local agencies became more sensitive about the collaboration of the missionary enterprise with colonialism.[42]

Government Agency

While discussing the British government's attitude towards education in America during colonial times, historian Bernard Bailyn writes:

> "...formal institutions of instruction occupied a strategic place in English life, and they therefore fell within the concern of the state. But the role of the state in formal education, though forceful, was indirect. It was exhortatory, empowering, supervisory, regulatory; it was, with rare exceptions, neither initiating nor sustaining."[43]

British attitude in India regarding education was not much different than it had been in America. The Macauleyan system of education, in which women did not exist, continued

[41] Major Scott Waring, who was placed on the personal staff of Governor-General Warren Hastings, expressed this view in July, 1807, when he published some "Observations on the Present State of the East India Company", cited in Marshman, John Clark, *The Life and Times of Carey, Marshman, and Ward: Embracing the History of the Serampore Mission* (London: Council of Serampore College, 2005, first published in 1859, two volumes), Vol.I, p. 338.

[42] See Kopf, David, *The Brahmo Samaj and the Shaping of the Modern Indian Mind* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979) for a discussion on the 'politicization of the Bengal Renaissance,' pp. 129-154.

[43] Bailyn, Bernard, *Education in the Forming of American Society: Needs and Opportunities for Study* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, first published by the University of North Carolina Press,1960, Norton Paperback, 1972), p. 20.

to operate until the Wood's Education Despatch (1854)[44], which provided a guideline for native education from the primary to the highest levels. The Department of Education was established (1855) to be headed by the Director of Public Instruction who was required to submit to the government an annual report on the progress of education in his province.[45] In the Despatch, there was provision for women education as well, though in quite vague terms. As evidenced by contemporary newspapers, Wood's Despatch received considerable support from the newly emergent Hindu middle class, the Hindu Bhadralok, emerging from the collaboration of the early banian and mercantile class with the British.[46] Although women's education did not feature prominently in the Despatch of 1854, it was with the spread of western education among Bengali males and the rise of the nascent middle class that created the demand for social reform and social change of which female education was an integral part. The Despatch of 1854 was a glaring reflection of the British government's policy of caution and ambivalence with respect to the issue of female education. Government did its part by extending the grant-in-aid net to both formal and informal schools for girls and left it to the locals to take the initiative in establishing institutions while the newly established departments of education ensured full supervision over the use of government aid.[47]

It was no coincidence that a milestone in the educational history of India was achieved in 1882 during Lord Ripon's term as Viceroy (1880-1884). Education was an area of special interest to him and he came to India committed to promote the extension of elementary education among the marginal classes.[48] Lord Ripon appointed the first education commission in the history of modern India to look into the anomalies produced

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[44] The debate has been extensively dealt with in David Kopf, *British Orientalism and the Bengal Renaissance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), A.R. Mallick, *British Policy and the Muslims in Bengal 1757-1856,* (Asiatic Society of Pakistan, 1961); Zillur Rahman Siddiqui, 'Education' in *Banglapedia: National Encyclopedia of Bangladesh,* (Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, 2003).

[45] Departments of public instruction which replaced the provincial boards and councils of education were set up for Bengal, Madras, Bombay, the North-Western and the Punjab, the five provinces into which the territory of the East India Company were divided at that time.

[46] For the early encounters of the British in Bengal, see P.J.Marshall, *Trade and Conquest:Studies on the Rise of British Dominance in India* (Variorum Collected Studies, 1993), N.K.Sinha, *The Economic History of Bengal 1793-1848,* vol. 3, (Pharma K.L.Mukhopadhyay, Calcutta, 1984).

[47] For details of the Education Despatch of 1854 see J. Richey, *Selections from Educational Records,* 1840-59, Part-II, Calcutta: Superintendent of Government Printing, 1922.

[48] Ghosh, Suresh Chandra, *The History of Education in Modern India, 1757-1998,* (Hyderabad: Orient Longman Limited, 1995, revised and updated edition, 2000.), p.93.

by the Despatch of 1854. Popularly known as the Hunter Commission, the Indian Education Commission was established in 1882 with the Bengal Civilian Sir William Wilson Hunter of *The Imperial Gazetteer of India* (1881) fame as its Chairman, and B.L. Rice, the Mysore Director of Public Instruction as its Secretary. In the twenty-member body, Indians were represented by Ananda Mohan Bose, social reformer and founder of Sadharan Brahmo Samaj, Bhudev Mukhoadhyay, educationist, writer and journalist, Maharaja Jatindra Mohan Tagore, Kashinath Trimbak Teelang and Sayed Ahmed khan who later withdrew in favor of his son Sayed Mahmud. The Director of Public Instruction for Bengal A.W. Croft was also a member of the Commission. The missionaries were represented by Rev. Dr. Miller of Madras. Because of the Hunter Commission's entire focus on elementary education, female education could fit in prominently because, apart from a handful of exceptional women who had ventured into higher education and made some cracks in the glass ceiling, the education of girls was predominatly in the elementary stage even at the very end of the nineteenth century. At the beginning of the 20th century, a negligible number of girls were found above the Middle School stage. The figures shown in Tables 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3 illustrate this statement. A comparative figure for Calcutta has been included in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1: Comparative Figures for the Number of Girls' Schools in Eastern Bengal at the End of the 19th Century.

Division	High English				Middle English				Middle Vernacular				Upper Primary				Lower Primary			
	Schools		Pupils		Schools		Pupils		Schools		Pupils		Schools		Pupils		School		Pupils	
	1898	1899	1898	1899	1898	1899	1898	1899	1898	1899	1898	1899	1898	1899	1898	1899	1898	1899	1898	1899
Dhaka	01	01	133	130	--	--	--	--	04	04	235	238	31	37	715	872	644	582	10,247	9,171
Chittagong	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	02	02	112	91	06	05	162	137	421	431	6,505	7,059
Rajshahi	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	04	04	157	168	10	11	322	358	153	155	2,292	2,411
Calcutta	05	04	453	409	--	--	--	--	03	02	249	199	15	11	1,684	1,267	82	78	4,719	4,751

Total

	Schools		Pupils	
Division	1898	1899	1898	1899
Dhaka	680	624	11,330	10,411
Chittagong	429	438	6,779	7,287
Rajshahi	167	170	2,771	2,937
Calcutta	105	95	7,105	6,626

Source: Government of Bengal, General Department, Education Branch, General Report on Public Instruction in Bengal for 1898-1899, Calcutta, Bengal Secretariat Press, 1899, National Archives, Bangladesh.

Table: 2.2: Percentage of Girls in all Public Institutions Taken Together.

	1891-1892		1896-1897	
Division	Total female scholars in public institutions	Percentage of scholars in relation to the female population of school-going age (census of 1891)	Total female scholars in public institutions	Percentage of scholars in relation to the female population of school-going age (census of 1891)
Dhaka	14,935	2.0	17,194	2.3
Chittagong	13,478	4.3	11,554	3.6
Rajshahi	3,156	.5	5,188	.9
Calcutta	6,907	19.7	6,979	19.9

Source: *First Quinquennial Report, 1891-92 to 1896-97, Review of Education in Bengal*, Calcutta, Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, 1918, West Bengal Secretariat Library (VII 67, West Bengal Secretariat).

The Government of India was happy to accept almost all the recommendations of the Education Commission of 1882. The Commission recommended more liberal terms for grants-in-aid to girls schools than boys' schools in order to encourage locals to establish girls' schools. It recommended scholarships for girls to provide financial incentive for attending schools. Provisions for girls' hostels were also to be made to induce girls from distant places to take advantage of an education. In recognition of the latent function of the education of girls, the Commission recommended a separate curriculum for girls where practical subjects for girls like hygiene, domestic science, cooking, nursing, etc. would feature prominently.

Table 2.3: Female Pupils in Public Institutions in Eastern Bengal According to Stages of Instruction.

Stage of Instruction	Numbers						Percentage					
	1906 to 1907	1907 to 1908	1908 to 1909	1909 to 1910	1910 to 1911	1911 to 1912	1906 to 1907	1907 to 1908	1908 to 1909	1909 to 1910	1910 to 1911	1911 to 1912
High	36	28	45	43	55	78	.1	.1	.1	.1	.1	.1
Middle	80	82	107	134	168	181	.1	.1	.1	.1	.1	.1
Upper Primary	384	464	468	479	611	606	.6	.6	.4	.4	.5	.5
Lower Primary (A)	22,321	29,162	39,972	44,657	47,386	38,769	35.9	38.1	39.3	41.7	41.0	30.4
Lower Primary (B)	39,303	46,776	61,218	61,749	67,402	87,700	63.3	61.1	60.1	57.7	58.3	68.9
Total	62,124	76,512	101,810	107,062	115,622	127,334	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Compiled from the *Report on the Progress of Education in Eastern Bengal and Assam during the years 1907-08 to 1911-12,* Vol. II, Appendix Table IX, *NA,B.*

The aspect of the Hunter Commission's recommendations that affected the cause of female education most was that it freed the government from financial responsibility for the expansion of primary education in India. The District and Municipal Boards created under Lord Ripon's Local Self-Government Act (1882) were given the responsibility for the management and expansion of primary education, while girls' secondary education was to be "judiciously extended" where private efforts had been proved to be successful.[49] Local, municipal and provincial funds were to be earmarked in an equitable proportion for the support of boys as well as girls' schools (the amounts spent by the municipalities and district boards have been shown in Tables 3, 4, 5 and 6). The Commission even exempted the government from management of the schools, but stressed the need for strengthening the numbers of female inspecting staff. Local bodies were to have real and effective authority over schools maintained by them. Subject to the conditions laid down by the Education Department for the appointment of teachers, local bodies were to appoint teachers of their choice. Female teachers were to gradually replace male teachers in girls' schools. Securing the co-operation of ladies in the management of girls' schools was also a primary target. However, it would be quite relevant to mention here that although on paper it looked good to have more women in management and teaching positions, the personnel with practical field experience thought otherwise. On the basis of long experience, the Inspectress of Schools, Eastern Bengal and Assam, Miss M.E.A. Garret, comments that girls' schools need almost daily supervision and that "The infinite number of detail connected with a staff of women far exceeds that connected with a staff of men, and from a distance it is impossible to give them that attention which they need."[50]

The Government had accepted the recommendations of the Hunter Commission in its entirety. However, even Government insiders felt that the Commission had not done any service to the cause of female education in India by not making the Government

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[49] *Progress of Education in Bengal, 1902-03 to 1906-07: Third Quinquennial Review*, Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Press, 1907, West Bengal State Archives.

[50] *Notes on the Management and Finance of Urban Schools by the Inspectress*, M.E.A. Garret, Inspectress of Schools, Eastern Bengal and Assam, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, Education (A) Proceedings for the month of January 1912, File No. E/25-E, Assam Secretariat, Sylhet Proceedings, National Archives, Bangladesh.

responsible for the expansion of female education in India and leaving this branch of education to the charge of the local bodies, voluntary organizations, religious associations and philanthropists. The then Officiating Director of Public Instruction C.B. Clarke commented that:

> "...I regret that Government has made such small attempts to introduce the education of girls in Bengal. There is indeed the Bethune school and the Eden school at Dacca; but, as Mrs. Wheeler (Inspectress of Schools) justly observes, when Government commenced the encouragement of boys' education, it commenced on a very different scale. At present the whole Government contribution to national girls' education in every shape cannot exceed Rs. 20,000 a year. I most fully concur in Mrs. Wheeler's opinion that 10 per cent of the net Government expenditure would hardly be an adequate portion to devote to girls' education. The official reply to this is, where are the girls on whom we are to expend the money, which is like sending a chowkidar to count the bullock-carts before sanctioning a railway which will create its own traffic."[51]

The recommendations of the Hunter Commission brought the most acute disappointment to the Christian missionary camp. It was the missionaries who had lobbied vigorously for a review of the Education Despatch of 1854 which was partly responsible for the setting up of the Hunter Commission by Lord Ripon in the first place. The British Raj's proclaimed non-interference in religious matters prompted the government officials to adopt an unsympathetic attitude to mission schools. Also, the growth of nationalist feelings in the second half of the nineteenth century translated into hard anti-Christian, anti-missionary feelings, threatening the extinction of missionary endeavors in Bengal. The Hunter Commission, instead of stressing the importance of a more Christian education, as the missionaries had hoped, insisted instead that education should be secular. Putting the responsibility of the management of primary education on local boards also ensured the virtual eroding of Christian influence on curricula and the preparation of text-books.

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[51] Government of Bengal, General Department, Education Branch, January 1885, File 13, Proceedings 5-6, paragraph 8, Memo by DPI C.B. Clarke forwarded to Secretary to the Government of Bengal. West Bengal State Archives.

The types of schools that were established in the post-Hunter Commission years in Eastern Bengal ranged from model primary schools for girls, twenty-two in number, to urban girls' schools of an improved type which enjoyed a recurring grant of forty rupees per month from the Education Department which were mostly situated at sub-divisional headquarters and other important centers.[52] A type of school that had no corollary in West Bengal but was just a creation of Eastern Bengal were *Panchayeti* union girls' schools operating in different districts. They were managed by district boards while necessary capital and recurring funds were provided by the Education Department.[53] The Education Department also set up Peasant Girls' Schools in remote places on an experimental basis. They taught up to the lower primary standard and received a grant of thirteen rupees per month.[54] However, no matter what role the government did or did not play, it was the people themselves who were the main propelling force behind whatever progress was achieved to improve the status of women in society. The main work of spreading education through establishing schools was done by the local enthusiasts in a private manner not too grand in scale, but with immense social impact nevertheless.

Indigenous Private Enterprise

The western-educated elite and the newly emergent Bengali middle class had taken seriously James Mill's scathing criticism of how the Hindus treated their women in his 1817 treatise *The History of British India*.[55] "The condition of women is one of the most remarkable circumstances in the manners of nations…A state of dependence more strict and humiliating than that which is ordained for the weaker sex among the Hindus cannot be easily conceived."[56] Bengal's answer to such insinuations made by the British colonists and their missionary corroborators was the unprecedented push to 'break the seclusion of their women and thus pave the way towards women's emancipation', as

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[52] *Report on Public Instruction in Bengal for 1917-18* (Calcutta: The Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, 1919), p. 14.
[53] Ibid.
[54] Ibid.
[55] Mill, James, *The History of British India*, vol. I, edited by H.H. Wilson (London, 1840).
[56] Ibid., pp. 309-10, cited in Dipesh Chakrabarty, 'Postcoloniality and the Artifice of History: Who Speaks for "Indian" Pasts?' in Guha, Ranjit (ed.), *A Subaltern Studies Reader, 1986-1995*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, Oxford India paperbacks second impression, 2003), p. 276.

Ghulam Murshid has put it.[57] Thus the concerted effort of the local elite provided the second catalyst for the spread of female education in Bengal. While the intelligentsia provided the moral and ideological support for women's education, the philanthropists sponsored the founding of schools, supported the local initiatives for providing zenana education and the patronized the numerous associations that were formed to initiate and implement reforms. The waves of the social reform movement initiated in Calcutta did not take long to hit the shores of Eastern Bengal where educational institutions for girls sprang up not just in the main cities of Dacca and Chittagong but also in the *mofussil* towns Barisal, Noakhali, Comilla, Jessore, Tangail and Mymensingh, to name a few. As Borthwick has observed in her pioneering study on the women of Bengal that, "Enthusiasm for female education was especially apparent in the *mofussil*, where girls' schools sprang up for the daughters of the resident *bhadralok*. They were rarely set up by government initiative."[58] However, the reformatory mood of the early and mid-nineteenth century, Murshid states, took a turn towards retrogression before the nineteenth century ended: "men first initiated, and then, seeing that women were becoming less subordinate and orthodox, reacted against the modernization of women."[59] Partha Chatterjee dismisses Murshid's take on the 'womens' question' depicted in the grand narrative style as simplistic and linear, and one that does not take into account the complex polemic of a society in confrontation with the internal dichotomous pull of the nationalist veneration for traditionalism on the one hand and the necessity of achieving modernity on the other, in a colonial environment where the dominant culture of the colonizer is highly judgmental of the colonized as weak and backward.[60] The domestic world of women, therefore, had to be redefined, redesigned and remodeled in such a way that would be modern enough to disable the condescending attitude of the British, yet traditional enough to uphold the Eastern virtues of spiritualism and acquiescing of man's absolute

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[57] Murshid, Ghulam, *Reluctante Debutante: Response of Bengali Women to Modernization, 1849-1905* (Rajshahi: Sahitya Samsad, Rajshahi University, 1983), p. 71.
[58] Borthwick, Meredith, *The Changing Role of Women in Bengal, 1849-1905* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), p. 84.
[59] Ibid., p. 12.
[60] See Chatterjee, Partha, 'The Nationalist Resolution of the Women's Question', in Sangari, Kumkum and Vaid, Sudesh (eds.), *Recasting Women: Essays in Colonial History* (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1989), pp. 233-253.

authority. Sonia Nishat Amin's groundbreaking work on the modernizing process of Muslim women of the upper and nascent middle class observes:

> "The aspiring elite had to validate their claim to modernity, and at the same time establish the dignity of their own past tradition. Women had to be both the proof of the community's modernity and its fortress against the denigrating onslaught of that very modernity, which if not countered would obliterate the Indian's cultural existence."[61]

Thus was born what post-colonial scholars call the 'new patriarchy', wherein orthodox views on women's conduct and behavior was strongly contested, but then again, as Judith Walsh so poignantly hammers home: "reforms would be allowed to go only so far and no farther."[62] The gendered separation of home and public life was a given perimeter, not to be negotiated or compromised. Therefore, the teleology of social reforms concerning women did not include establishing her economic worth through employment. To break through the restrictions imposed by a controlled reform agenda, Bengali needed the power and wealth of a Nawab Faizunnessa (1847-1905),[63] the strength of character of a Rokeya Sakhawat Hossein (1880-1932),[64] the passionate perseverance of a Rashshundari Debi (ca. 1809-ca. 1900)[65] or a combination of all of the above characteristics to make significant cracks in the glass ceiling. These pioneers are only the most illustrious and well-known of the ladies of Bengal. There were nameless, countless others who broke all convention at a time and place where sex roles were rigidly defined and female sexuality was strictly controlled and brought about change from within.[66]

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[61] Amin, Sonia Nishat, *The World of Muslim Women in Colonial Bengal, 1876-1939* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996), p. 31.

[62] Walsh, Judith, *Domesticity in Colonial India: What Women Learned When Men Gave Them Advice* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 53.

[63] Zamindar of Comilla and founder of schools, author of the semi-autobiographical book *Rupjalal* in 1876. She was also a member of *Sakhi Samiti*, founded by Swarnakumari Devi.

[64] Born in Rangpur, founder of the first school for Muslim girls, the Sakhawat Memorial School, in Calcutta in 1911.

[65] Born in Pabna, is the author of the first known autobiography, *Amar Jibon*, first published in 1868.

[66] The nineteenth century British philosopher Herbert Spencer, while explaining the evolution of patriarchy, argues that the 'domestication' of women and the dominance of man was established as means of social survival: women came to be protected from the necessity of production and the competition of the marketplace; the less women worked, the better for society, since the health of the future generation would then improve. If women would only perceive the glory of the domestic sphere, thought Spencer, they would

In the Annual Report on Education of the Director of Public Instruction for 1880-1881, Mrs. Wheeler, Inspectress of Schools, sounds highly optimistic when she says, "...everyday brings signs that the demand for female education in Bengal is surely, however slowly, advancing and extending."[67] While keeping in mind that the optimism of Mrs. Wheeler was probably biased by the progress registered for Calcutta and her adjoining districts, Eastern Bengal did not lag too far behind given the agricultural basis of the economy of this region. History shows that it has always been the forte entrepreneurial middle classes to initiate social reform movements. A strong middle class would not grow in Eastern Bengal until after the British left in 1947. Nevertheless, irrespective of the Calcutta-centric development, socio-economic change was crawling on at its own pace.

For administrative purposes, the province of Eastern Bengal was divided into three divisions: Dhaka, Chittagong and Rajshahi. The Dhaka Division consisted of Dhaka, Narayanganj, Barisal, Faridpur, Tangail, Mymensingh, Jamalpur, Kishoreganj, Netrokona, Madaripur, Perojpur and Patuakhali. The Chittagong Division consisted of Chittagong, Comilla, Brahmanbaria, Chandpur and Noakhali. The Rajshahi Division consisted of Rajshahi, Natore, Dinajpur, Jalpaiguri, Rangpur, Bogra, Sherpur (Bogra), Pabna, Sirajganj, Rampur Boalia and Old Malda. Most of these places could claim to have possessed several girls' schools established by the philanthropy of local landlords in the 1860s. When the Director of Public Instruction W.S. Atkinson wrote in his report for 1864-65 that, "A most gratifying feature in the year's operations is that schools of all kinds for girls have increased in number from 102 to 163, and in strength from 2,971 to 4,185,"[68] the rise in numbers obviously account for the progress recorded in Calcutta and its adjacent districts, but Eastern Bengal did contribute to the statistical figures, however small they may be. More often than not, the schools were opened by the local zamindars

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wish for none other. Spencer, Herbert, *The Principles of Sociology, Works* (Osnabrück: Otto Zeller, 1966, reprint ed.).

[67] Annual Report on Education for 1880-1881, Government of Bengal, General Department, Education Branch, A Proceedings, dated 23rd November, 1882, NA, B.

[68] Report on Public Instruction in Bengal for the year 1864-65, GOB, Education (A) Proceedings, Bundle 1, List 18, File 5, NA, B.

for the education of the girls of the founder's own family, and later expanded to accommodate other girls of the area and thus qualify to apply for government aid. In Barisal, Babu Durga Mohan Das, Government Pleader; Babu Annada Charan Khastgir, Sub-Assistant Surgeon (the girls' school Dr. Khastgir opened in Chittagong later became very famous), and Babu Dwarkanath Biswas, a zamindar, were the driving force behind the promotion of female education there. These enlightened gentlemen established two female schools in the district headquarters and one of the eleven girls' schools that were established in the interior of the district that was reported by the Magistrate in 1864-65.[69] The following year, six more girls' schools were reported to have been added to those existing in the previous year, and that three of these schools received grant-in-aid while application for aid for the remaining three was pending.[70] A total of 161 girls were receiving education, while the student population in the boys' schools of the district was upwards of 4,000. One girl from Barisal passed the middle standard in the academic year 1881-82.[71] All of those schools, however, did not stand the test of time. In 1911, the Female Education Committee (discussed in chapter 4), while taking stock of all schools in Eastern Bengal, recorded a Middle Vernacular School, a Middle English School and a Mission Middle Vernacular School.[72]

The zamindars of Mymensingh, the district which, during colonial rule, included Tangail, Kishoreganj, Jamalpur and Netrokona, have been well-known for their altruism and patronage towards the spread of education. The Magistrate of Mymensingh, in 1865, reports that there was one school in Mymensingh Sadar Station where eight girls were studying, and two more schools in the interior where twenty-nine girls were studying. The Magistrate also observes: "...the natives of the district appear exceedingly ready to secure educational advantages for their children."[73] Even in present day Bangladesh, the

[69] From C.T. Buckland, Esq., Commissioner of the Dacca Division, to the Secretary to the Government of Bengal, No. 653A, dated 8th August, 1866, GOB, Education Department (A) Proceedings for February 1867, No. 8, NA, B.
[70] Ibid.
[71] GOB, General Department, Education Branch A Proceedings, November, 1882, NA,B.
[72] Proceedings of the Female Education Committee, 9th June, 1911, Education (A) Proceedings, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, Assam Secretariat Sylhet Proceedings, the month of January, 1912, File No. E-25-E, Nos. 53-56, NA, B.
[73] Report of the Commissioner of the Dacca Division, GOB, Edu. Branch, February Proceedings, 1867.

Bindubashini Girls' School of Tangail and the Bidyamayee Girls' High School of Mymensingh are famous as well-functioning schools that have the honor of having been founded in the nineteenth century. The Bindubashini Girls' School was established in 1882, two years after the Bindubashini Boys' School, by Monmoth Roy, the zamindar of Santosh, Tangail. The famous Roy family maintained the schools entirely from their own funds. The financial reports compiled by the Female Education Committee in 1911 show that there was a Head Pundit for the school on a monthly pay of twenty rupees, a Second Pundit and an Assistant Mistress on a monthly pay of ten rupees each and a maid servant on a monthly pay of three rupees and eight annas and that the school was supported entirely by the zamindars Babu P.N. Roy Chowdhuri and Babu M.N. Roy.[74]

The zamindars of Muktagachha and their extended family were the social leaders of Mymensingh for seven generations till they left their ancestral home for Kolkata after the abolition of the zamindari system in 1950.[75] The area known as Binodbari was renamed Muktagachha by Ramram, the elder of four sons of Sri Krishna Acharya who came to live here from Bagura with three of his brothers and founded the zamindari. Their descendents built canals, roads, charitable dispensaries, libraries, boys' schools and schools for girls. Maharaja Surya Kanta Acharya, an adopted son of the descendents of the fourth and youngest son of Sri Krishna Acharya became an extremely prominent zamindar of Mymensingh who played host to Lord Curzon during the latter's visit to Mymensingh in 1904. Rabindranath Tagore, Mahatma Gandhi and Subhash Chandra Bose also stayed with the zamindars of Muktagachha when they came to Mymensingh. They lodged at the Alexander Castle, the house Maharaja Surya Kanta Acharya had built for the Czar of Russia, Alexander II, when he was invited by the Maharaja to visit Mymensingh (The Maharaja built the house following Russian architecture for the Czar to stay in, although the royal guest never came). Maharaja Surya Kanta Acharya donated property that would yield an annual income of Rs. 2,000 to the National College of

[74] Op. Cit.

[75] The autobiography of Sri Jibendrakishore Acharyachowdhury, the last descendent of Sri Krishna Acharya (the founder of the Muktagachha zamindari) to have lived in Muktagachha, gives in detail the family tree and the life and times of the zamindars in, *Ami, Prothom Khondo: Puratan Katha, Ditiyo Khondo: Amar Kotha* [Myself, Part I: Story of the Past, Part II: My Story] (Kolkata: Pioneer Publishers, Part I, 1979 and Part II, 1983). See also, Sattar, Muhammed Abdus, *Mymensingh Anchaler Jamidarder Itihash* [History of the Zaminders of Mymensingh] (Dhaka: Katharup Library, 2006).

Jadavpur, which has now become the Jadavpur University of Kolkata. The most abiding legacy of this family that is relevant to this study, however, is the establishment of the Bidyamayee Girls' High School that is still considered as one of the best school for girls in Mymensingh. In 1873 Rambabu, another illustrious member of the Muktagachha zamindar family established in his house which stood on 3.5231 acres of land, a school to educate the girls of the family. At some point of time, the school was named Alexander Girls School. Whether the Alexander Girls' School was named after the Czar of Russia in anticipation of his visit or not, we cannot be sure until historical documents to that effect have been found, but it is most unlikely that it was named after the famous missionary Alexander Duff as some researchers have claimed.[76] Not only did the missionary Alexander Duff never visit Mymensingh, or any part of Eastern Bengal, for that matter, the patrons of the school were orthodox Hindu zamindars, and had no logical reason to name their school after a Christian missionary. This school became the famous Bidyamayee School through the generous funding of zamindar Jagat Kishore Acharya, yet another philanthropist of the family of the Muktagachha zamindars. He donated fifty thousand rupees to honor the memory of his mother Bidyamayee Devi. To honor the wishes of the generous donor, the name of the school was changed from Alexander Girls' School to Bidyamoyee School. Later the zamindars of Gauripur and Krishnanagar, both extended family members of the Muktagachha zamindars, donated nineteenth thousand rupees and six thousand rupees respectively to build a boarding house where there would be provision of separate accommodation for Hindus, Muhammadans, Brahmos and Christians and separate kitchen and dining arrangements for each community so that boarders would not have to fear losing caste or face other problems regarding socio-religious customs. The school was able to create a positive response from the leading Muslim families of Mymensingh.

When the Female Education Committee enquired about the condition of girls' schools in Eastern Bengal in 1911, Bidyamayee Girls' School had a student population of 150 of whom 70 were beyond the Lower Primary Stage. The Head Mistress, Miss

[76] Mir, Zaheda Nazneen, *Bangladeshe Nari Unnayaner Dhara, 1947-1995* [The Process of Women's Development in Bangladesh, 1947-1995], unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Department of History, Jahangirnagar University, 2009, p. 72.

Bhaktishudha Ghosh trained at Isabella Thoburn College, Lukhnow and was able to maintain a most amiable environment in the school as the report observes: "Teachers and children appear more friendly, English is spoken more freely, and drill and games have been introduced daily throughout the school."[77] Probably because of her superior qualifications or probably because Bidyamayee School was so well-endowed, Miss Ghosh was the highest paid Head Mistress among her contemporaries. She received a pay of Rs. 150 per month, whereas Head Mistresses of girls' schools of other district headquarters were hardly paid half that amount. For example, the Head Mistress of Barisal Middle English Girls' School, the Head Mistress of Pabna Girls' School and that of Faridpur Middle Vernacular School received Rs. 30 per month; the Head Mistress of Bogra Middle Vernacular Girls' School received Rs. 40 per month while that of Noakhali Girls' School received Rs. 50.[78] The Head Mistress of Faizunnessa Girls' School, Comilla, another well-endowed school, received Rs. 75 per month. Even the Head Master of Dr. Khastagir's Girls' School in Chittagong was paid Rs. 125 per month.[79] In comparison, Miss Ghosh was highly paid indeed. The ten other teachers who were employed there during the first quarter of the twentieth century, and a matron who looked after the hostel, were also paid more than the average standard salary of those times. Except for three, all of the teachers of the school were female. The patronization of girls' education was a tradition the zamindars of Muktagachha continued in the area. In 1907 zamindar Nagendra Narayan Acharya Chowdhury, another descendent of Sri Krishna Acharya, founder of the Muktagachha zamindari, established a school in one of the houses he owned for the education the girls of his family. According to the autobiography of Sri Jibendrakishore, however, the school was established by Nagendra Narayan Acharya Chowdhury's wife Mrinalini Devi in memory of her husband. The school was initially established only for the girls of their family. By the 1930s, daughters of the zaminder's employees began to be allowed admission and gradually the Muslim girls of the area were allowed to join also. The Nagendra Narayan Pilot Girls' High School is

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[77] Proceedings of the Female Education Committee, 9th June, 1911, Education (A) Proceedings, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, Assam Secretariat Sylhet Proceedings, the month of January, 1912, File No. E-25-E, Nos. 53-56, NA,B.

[78] Financial Statement of Zillah Girls' Schools, Proceedings of the Female Education Committee, 9th June, 1911, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam.

[79] Ibid.

now an institution with over a thousand female students.[80] These schools that have made a considerable impact on the socio-cultural development of Mymensingh stand proud today as reminders of the social reform movement that stirred all of Bengal in the nineteenth century.

Like Mymensingh, Jessore, a southwestern district of Eastern Bengal presently in the Khulna Division (Jessore was first in the Nadia Division, and then in the Presidency Division during colonial times), was quite advanced economically and culturally. The Magistrate of Jessore, in his annual general report for the year 1865-66 reports that there are fifteen schools for girls in the vicinity of the district headquarters, of which 5 are aided by Government, and there are also three schools for adult females. We would like to present the observations about Jessore of R.B. Chapman, the Officiating Commissioner of Nadia in 1865 in its entirety:

> "A subject of much interest is the state of the Female School in the district. The average attendance at these schools is from eight to ten or 12 girls. They are generally established by some enlightened resident in the village, who gives up a room in his house for a school, sends some of his female relations to be taught, and appoints his brother or cousin or some near relation to teach them. The girls learn to read and write Bengalee; they have not yet advanced to the point of receiving English instruction. Two of these schools I have inspected, and was very much astonished at the progress which the girls had made, and at the eagerness which they displayed in wishing to learn. The answer which they gave to questions put to them, shewed an evident understanding of what they had read; their replies shewed, I think, greater quickness than was observable in girls of the same age. To make the advantage derivable from the schools, however permanent, the establishment of adult female schools is indispensable. The customs of the country require that the girls should be married at an early age...There is, undoubtedly, a desire amongst the more intelligent of the community to have their female relations educated, and a beginning has been made in Jessore, which is highly satisfactory."[81]

The Commissioner regretted that because of the custom of early marriage, the education which little girls receive in the short period that they stay in school is soon forgotten.

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[80] Islam, Aminul, *Nagendra Narayn Pilot Girls' School: 101*, Star Insight: Know Bangladesh Better, A Fortnightly Supplement of *The Daily Star*, June 21, 2008, vol. 2, Issue 25.

[81] Extract from the Jessore Magistrate's Annual General Report for the year 1865-66, From R.B. Chapman, Officiating Commissioner of the Nuddea Division, GOB, Education (A) Proceedings for February, 1867.

That is why he sees the necessity of adult female schools. He reiterated the necessity of female teachers and lamented the lack of them. The Commissioner also insisted in his report on the desirability and of the introduction of sewing and needlework in the curriculum. Kushtia, which is presently in Bangladesh, was a district of the Nadia Division in colonial times. As early as 1854, in Kumarkhali of Kushtia, Kangal Harinath Majumder established a vernacular school adjacent to the local temple, where the Hindu girls of the area presumably studied with the boys.[82] Nothing else is known about the school. The Kumarkhali area truly pioneered girls' education in Kushtia. In 1873 the local landlord Babu Ramlal established a girls' school which has remained till today as a legacy of the philanthropy of the local zamindars. It is a government high school today and is called Charulata Government High School.[83]

The *Bamabodhini Patrika* (Journal for the Enlightenment of Women)[84] also reported in its October issue of 1865, citing *Dacca Prakash*[85] that girls' schools were established in Durgapur, Dhanputa, Mangalpaut, Azmatpur, Mathurapur, Agrail, Khajura, Majiali, Goherpur and Nebutala of Jessore district, and that each school had an average of ten to fifteen students. Sixteen ladies were said to be studying in the adult female schools.[86] The *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, an influential daily newspaper published from Calcutta since 1871, had begun its journey from Jessore in February, 1868.[87] From its very first issue it began strongly advocating for girls' education and zenana education as the only available solution short of raising the age for marriage. The paper praises the financial assistance given by Babu Raj Krishna Mitra, a Clerk at the Faujdari Court, for

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[82] Ali, Shawkat, *Kushtiar Itihash* [History of Kushtia] (Kushtia, 1978), cited in Nazneed, Mir Zaheda, '*Bangladeshe Nari Unnayaner Dhara*', p. 73.

[83] Ibid.

[84] The most popular monthly journal for women published from Calcutta. Edited by Umeshchandra Dutt, it was in circulation from 1863 to 1922, the most long-lived of all journals that began publication in the nineteenth century.

[85] *Dacca Prakash* was the first weekly newspaper published in Bangla which began publication in 1861.

[86] *Bamabodhini Patrika*, October, 1865, cited in Basu, Swapan, *Sambad-Samayikpatre Unish Shataker Bangalisamaj: vol. II* [Bengali Society of the Nineteenth Century as Depicted in Newspapers and Journals] (A Selection of news and articles from 19th Century Journals compiled and edited by Swapan Basu), (Calcutta: West Bengal Bangla Academy, 2003), p. 293.

[87] The paper was edited by the brothers Sisir Ghosh and Moti Lal Ghosh, whose mother's name was Amrita. Their father, Hari Narayan Ghosh, who funded the paper, was a rich merchant of Jessore.

establishing the Jessore Hindu Girls' School in the town of Jessore in January, 1867.[88] The land for establishing the school was provided by Babu Madan Mohan Majumdar. It started with six girls, but within a year, had twenty girls on its roll, studying at the Lower Primary level. The students did not pay any fees; the expenses of the school were completely managed through the patronage of the local merchants and rich landowners whose daughters and relatives attended the school. The Inspector of Schools C.B. Clarke and the Collector J. Monroe visited the school and expressed satisfaction with the performance of the students and gave them prize money of five rupees.[89]

In Rajshahi, in 1868, Raja Promoth Nath Roy, of the wealthy Dighapattia zamindari, provided an endowment of Rupees 4,500, so that the Rajshahi Aided Girls' School could survive.[90] It was to be a permanent endowment, paid in Government Promissory Notes, yielding an annual profit of Rupees 180 which would meet the entire amount of private or local contributions and keep the school running. In honor of this contribution, the school was renamed after the Raja. By 1911 the school was housed in a good building and there were eighty-five girls on the roll, three of whom were beyond the Lower Primary stage. There were several British ladies residing with their husbands in the Rajshahi district headquarters and they were willing to serve on the school Committee. The school today is called Government Promoth Nath Girls' High School.

Like the Roys of Dighapattia, Rajshahi, in Pabna we find mention of Babu Harishchandra Sharma in the November, 1862 circulation of *Somprakash*. He set up a girls' school in his own house, at his own expense in that year.[91] Harishchandra Sharma's wife Bamashundari helped her husband by teaching the girls. Within a year of the establishment of the school, there were twenty-five girls studying there, all daughters of the Hindu landowners and wealthy merchants of the town. The Pabna Girls' School, as it

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[88] *Amrita Bazar Patrika* , March 26, 1868, cited in Swapan Basu, *Sambad-Samayikpatre Unish Shataker Bangalisamaj*, pp. 296-297.
[89] Op.Cit., p. 297.
[90] Memorandum from W.S. Atkinson, Esq., Director of Public Instruction, No. 1686, dated Fort William, the 7th April, 1868, GOB, Branch Edu., (A) Proceedings Nos. 83-84, NA, B.
[91] *Somprakash* was a weekly newspaper started in Novermber, 1858, by Dwarakanath Vidyabhusan(1819-886), a professor of Sanskrit College. The newspaper used to be published from his home at Changripota village, near Sonarpur, southeast of Calcutta (now Kolkata).

was called, received a government grant of thirty-five rupees per month. Babu Prannath Saha was the Secretary of the school and his sister (her name is not found in any record) was a teacher there. Srimati Bamashundari, wife of Harishchandra Sharma, was the Head Mistress and drew a salary of twenty rupees per month.[92] By 1911 the pay of the Head Mistress had increased to thirty rupees. There was a Head Pundit for the school on a pay of twenty-five rupees per month. Female Education Committee (FEC) reports show District Board and Municipality contributions of twenty-two rupees and eight rupees respectively. Private sources contributed twenty-five rupees to the monthly income of the school.[93] There were seventy-six children on the roll as of 1911, of whom 12 were beyond the Lower Primary stage. Government sanctioned Rs. 12,000 for acquiring land for the school and construct a new building complete with mistresses' quarters. FEC reports say this school is one of the best in the Rajshahi Division. Of the other schools of the Division, the Rangpur Aided Girls' School owed the entire cost of construction for the building it was housed in, to the generosity of Babu Ananda Mohan Roy Choudhuri, zamindar of Tepa. As of 1911, the school had sixty children on the roll, of whom six were beyond the Lower Primary stage. Babu Ananda Mohon Roy Choudhuri had promised to pay another sum of Rs. 2,287 to carry out improvements to the school. Another zamindar, Raja Surat Chandra Roy Choudhury of Malda, promised Rs. 5,000 in 1911 to acquire a new building for the Barlow Aided Girls' School, Malda. There were nearly 100 children on the roll. The Head Pundit, a second pundit and the Head Pundit's wife made up the teaching staff. There were two European ladies in the Malda station, of whom one was a doctor and both of them were on the managing committee of the school. The Aided Girls' School in Jalpaiguri was one other school where there was a Head Mistress and she enjoyed a salary of forty-five rupees per month and a there was a second mistress on a salary of twenty rupees. The school had fifty-four students on its roll. The wife of the Commissioner, Mrs. Monahan sat on the school Committee. The FEC found fifty-four girls in the Dinajpur Aided Girls' School of the Division of whom two were beyond the Lower Primary stage and sixty girls in the Bogra Aided Girls' School seven

[92] *Dacca Prakash*, 31 December, 1863, cited in Swapan Basu, 2003.
[93] Financial Statements of Zillah Girls' Schools, Proceedings of the Female Education Committee, 9th June, 1911, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam.

of whom were beyond the Lower Primary stage, but there were no secondary schools for girls in the Division yet.

Till now we have seen that the Hindu landowners and merchants and other professionals have come forward with their will, their money and their labor to better the lot of the women of this region. In Sirajganj of the then Rajshahi Division, we find a Muslim philanthropist who made a name for himself not only as an author[94] but also as a founder of many boys' schools in Pabna, Dhaka, Faridpur and Mymensingh, the places that his work took him. Munshi Mohammed Meherullah Shirajganji was a Municipality Commissioner and also Member of the District Board and local Union Board. In 1895 he founded a girls' school in his own village Hossainpur, in Sirajganj, now a full-fledged district, and there worked, Khairunnessa Khatun (c.1876-1910), whom researchers identify as the first Muslim professional woman of Eastern Bengal.[95] From the inception of the school in 1895 till her death in 1910, Khairunnessa Khatun spent the last fifteen years of her life working for the school in Sirajganj while her husband Asiruddin, with a transferable job as Sub-Registrar, moved from one district to another. As the founder of the school did not have the means to provide a large endowment, Khairunnessa Khatun took it upon herself to contribute to the school funds from her own income and appeal to the men and women of the village help bear the expenses of the school. The story goes that she implored the womenfolk to set aside a little bit of rice before cooking everyday so that she could collect them, sell the rice, and buy provisions for the school as it did not charge fees from the students and they had to be provided with books, paper and pencils.[96] Her failure to induce the wealthy people of the surrounding areas led her to write a scathing criticism of such people in an essay in the monthly journal *Nabanur*[97],

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[94] Munshi Mohammed Mehrullah Sirajganji wrote didactic tracts aimed at social reform and moral education. A few of them are: *Islami Baktritamala* [Lectures on Islam] (1897?); *Balya Bibaher Bishmoy Phol* [The Poisonous Results of Child Marriage] (1909); *Upadeshmala* [String of Advises] (1909), *Manabjiboner Kartobyo* [Duties of Mankind] and other books.

[95] See Maksud, Syed Abul, *Pothikrit Naribadi Khairunnessa Khatun* [Khairunnessa Khatun, the Pioneer Feminist] (Dhaka: Shahitya Prakash, 1992) p. 54.

[96] Ibid., p. 22.

[97] The monthly *Nabanur* started to be published from Calcutta (now Kolkata) in 1903. Syed Emdad Ali was the editor. It was the first journal edited by a Bengali Muslim which carried write-ups by Hindu and Muslim ladies in every issue. Azizunnessa Khatun and Rokeya Sakhawat Hossein wrote regularly for *Nabanur*.

which was published in 1904 under the title '*Amader Sikshar Antaray*', which, translated into English, means, 'the obstacles to our education'.[98] She wrote with anguish how the Hossainpur Balika Bidyalay of Sirajganj established by Munshi Mohammed Meherullah and supported entirely by him was languishing for lack of funds; the school needed desks and chairs and teaching material; repeated appeals to the Rajahs, Nawabs, zamindars and wealthy people of the country did not yield any financial help for the school; if such was the case, then how would a worthy cause like women's education flourish?[99] She compared a life without education to a world without the sun. An uneducated person was like an animal, she said. If learning increases a man's quality, wouldn't it do the same for a woman, she asks. An educated woman can increase the quality of family life manifold, she says. Finally, she invokes Islamic and Hindu scriptures to show how religion does not have any conflict with educating women.[100] The Hossainpur Girls' School did, finally receive a negligible amount of aid from the government and a little aid from the District Board. In answer to a question placed in the Bengal Legislative Assembly of August, 1914, by the Hon'ble Maulvi Mazharul Anwar Chaudhuri as to the number, location and amount of aid given to girls' schools exclusively for Muslims, Miss Broch, the Inspectress of Schools, provided a complete list of all schools for Muslim girls and there it was mentioned that Hossainpur Girls' School received Rs. 3 as government grant-in-aid and Rs. 5 from the District Board as aid.[101]

Khairunnessa Khatun was not only active in spreading the light of education among women in a backward village of Eastern Bengal; she was also among the earliest Muslim women to actively participate in politics. She was an activist of the Congress Party and published another essay in *Nabanur* (1905) in support of the Swadeshi

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[98] Khatun, Khairunnessa, 'Amader Shikshar Antaray' [The Obstacles to our Education], in *Nabanur*, Year 2, No. 8, Agrahayan, 1311 (BS), (1904 according to the Gregorian Calender).

[99] Op.Cit., p. 21.

[100] Two essays by Khairunnessa Khatun, '*Amader Shikshar Antaray*' and '*Swadeshanurag*' has been reprinted in in full in Akhtar, Shaheen and Bhowmik, Moushumi (eds.), *Bangali Musalman Lekhikader Nirbachita Rachana, 1904-1938* [an anthology of selected writings of Bengali Muslim women, 1904-1938], (Dhaka: The University Press Limited, 1998), pp. 39-46.

[101] Answer given by the Hon'ble H.F. Samman to the question asked by the Hon'ble Maulvi Mazharul Anwar Chaudhuri at the meeting of the Bengal Legislative Council held on the 5th August, 1914, GOB, General Department Education Branch (A) Proceedings, November, 1914, File No. 11-C/66, Nos. 91-93, NAB, List 18, Bundle 42, Oct-March, 1914-1915.

Movement, urging women to boycott foreign goods. She published anti-British political articles under the pseudonym Khoyer Kha Munshi. Some of the extant articles are: 'Rajnaitik Andolon O Musalman' (Political Movements and the Muslims); 'Swadeshi Mangal' (Swadeshi Welfare), 'Swadeshanurag' (Patriotism) and 'Amir Ali Shaheber Probondho' (The Essay of Mr. Ameer Ali). She also wrote a didactic manual called *Satir Pati Bhakti* (The Devotion of a Chaste Wife) which was first published in 1908. The second edition of the 61-page booklet was published by her husband Mr. Asiruddin in 1911 after her death. Later two more editions came out, proving the popularity of the manual. It contained advice about conjugal relationship, child-rearing and the importance of a woman's place in the family. Khairunnessa Khatun combined the qualities of political and social activism with idealism which, as a Muslim lady living in a remote village removed far from the socio-economic and political hub of Dhaka or metropolitan Calcutta, was a rare phenomenon in that time and age. The school she so loved and gave up following around her husband in the districts he served for has been devoured by the mighty Jamuna river, but her legacy remains as the pioneer feminist and educationist of Eastern Bengal.

Another brilliant legacy left by a woman who was also a zamindar is that of Nawab Faizunnessa of Comilla in the Chittagong Division. The impression of the Magistrate of Comilla in 1863 was: "About nine-tenths of the inhabitants are Mahomedans, and these, as a class, evince not only to the scheme of Government Education, but are positively hostile to it." Within a decade of the submission of that report, Nawab Faizunnessa was moving mountains to gain support for female education among that "hostile" community. In 1873, Faizunnessa Chaudhurani, established at Kandirpar in Comilla town, a primary school for girls which today still proudly stands as the lasting legacy of a great patron of learning and is called the Nawab Faizunnessa Girls' High School, Comilla. By 1911, when the Female Education Committee was taking stock of the girls' schools of Eastern Bengal, it was found that the school consisted of two branches, a Middle English branch and a Lower Primary branch. In the Middle English branch there were five teachers, all of them female, and all were doing "remarkably

well."[102] One of the teachers was trained at the Eden High School which had begun the teachers' training program in 1907. The Lower Primary branch was taught by three pundits. Nawab Faizunnessa's claim to fame is not just as a Muslim lady who administered her own zamindari (albeit from behind strict *purdah*), nor is it only because she was a philanthropist, establishing schools and madrassahs and hospitals, but in addition to all her achievements, she still remains the first published female author known to us. Faizunnessa's only extant literary work *Rupjalal* was published in 1876 in Dhaka. The other book she wrote was titled *Sangeet Lahari* (Waves of Music) but is not available anymore. *Rupjalal* is a love story written as a long poem interspersed by passages written in prose. The protagonists of *Rupjalal* are Prince Jalal and Princess Rupbano and the story revolves around their yearning for each other. It is said to be partially auto-biographical.[103]

Where Tangail could boast of a school such as Bindubashini School, Mymensingh had its Bidyamayee School, and Comilla the Faizunnessa Girls' School. Chittagong too was at the forefront of local initiative and philanthropy in the person of Dr. Annadacharan Khastagir, the leader of the Chittagong Brahmo Samaj. In 1878, Dr. Khastagir established a Middle Vernacular School for girls in his native Chittagong town.[104] True to the spirit of Brahmoism regarding the enlightenment of women, he educated all his four daughters in English. His fourth daughter, Kumudini, became an illustrious lady in her own right. She passed the Entrance examination from Bethune School and got her B.A. degree from Bethune College in 1887. Thereby she became the first female graduate of Chittagong. In 1890 Kumudini Khastagir joined the Bethune School as a teacher, and then moved to the Bethune College to become a lecturer there. In 1902 she became the Principal of the college and served till her retirement in 1913. After that, she came to Dhaka and worked as Assistant Inspectress of Schools of the Dhaka Division. She created quite a buzz in the conservative society of Eastern Bengal by refusing to marry her father chose for her and marrying for love when she was thirty-two.

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[102] *Ibid.*

[103] Amin, Sonia Nishat, *The World of Muslim Women in Colonial Bengal, 1876-1939* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996), p. 216.

[104] Rizvi, S.N.H. (ed.), *East Pakistan District Gazeteers*, Government of East Pakistan, Services and General Administration Department, 1970, p. 315.

Another one of Dr. Khastagir's daughters was Mohini. The *Brahmo Public Opinion*, the mouthpiece of the Brahmos in Kolkata, published in its edition of 25/7/1878 that Mohini Khastagir, Dr. Khastagir's second daughter, was educated in the Native Ladies' Female Normal School founded by the Indian Reform Association and that she was appointed as Governess to Her Highness the Moharani of Kuch Behar (Keshab Chandra Sen's daughter) on a salary of Rs. 50 per month.[105] Later she got married to the son of the Brahmo leader Keshab Chandra Sen. Dr. Khastagir's third daughter Binodini was married to the lawyer Jatra Mohan Sengupta in 1876. Jatra Mohan Sengupta was an advocate and later became a member of the Bengal Legislative Council. Binodini and Jatra Mohan Sengupta's son Jatindra Mohan Sengupta became a barrister, married and English lady[106] and became an active Congress politician from 1911, becoming President of the Bengal Swaraj Party in 1925. He was also elected to the Bengal Legislative Council. His mother Binodini died a premature death in 1906. The bereaved Jatra Mohan Sengupta donated a large piece of land and a house for his father-in-law's school to honor the memory of his wife. Situated on Jamal Khan Road, Dr. Khastagir's Government High School, as it is known today, is still the premier institution for girls' education in Chittagong. The government took over management of the school and made it a high school in 1907.

According to the information gathered by the Female Education Committee of 1908, by 1911 Dr. Khastagir's school had on its roll 110 girls, of whom 30 were above the Lower Primary Stage.[107] The authorities of Dr. Khastagir's Government High School felt that it was ready to send up girls for the Matriculation Examination, and, as such, the school should be provided with a staff similar to that in Mymensingh, and a hostel, "as the hostels both in Dacca and Mymensingh are now overcrowded."[108] The large number

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[105] Cited in Basu, Swapan (ed.), *Sambad-Samayikpatre Unish Shataker Banglaisamaj: Vol. II* [A Selection of news and articles from 19th Century Journals), published by West Bengal Bangla Academy, 2003, p. 520.

[106] After Jatindra Mohan's death in 1933, his wife Nellie actively participated in the nationalist struggle. She was elected to the Bengal Legislative Assembly in 1940 and again in 1946. In 1954 she was elected to the East Pakistan legislature. Nellie died in Kolkata in 1973. The Department of Posts, India, brought out a commemorative stamp of Jatindra Mohan Sengupta and his wife Nellie Sengupta on 22/07/1985.

[107] *Ibid.*, p. 22.

[108] *Ibid.*

of girls enrolling in the school made a newer, bigger school building necessary in place of its double-storied brick building.

The branching out of the Brahmo Samaj into all the major districts of Eastern Bengal (Mymensingh, Faridpur, Bogra, Barisal, Dinajpore, Jamalpur, Rangpur, Kushtia, Kishoreganj, Sylhet, Comilla and Dhaka) made a large contribution to the spread of female education in the region in general and Dhaka in particular. The proliferation of the Brahmo Samaj and its impact on spreading the "Bengal renaissance" from urbanized Kolkata to the essentially rural Eastern Bengal was observed by David Kopf thus:

> "Wherever a Brahmo Samaj was established, there followed an institutional complex dedicated to social and religious reform. Whether in Mymensingh, Barisal, Chittagong, Comilla, or Sylhet, there was invariably the mandir or community prayer hall and meeting place, a girls' school and boys' school on various levels, possibly a college, a Sangat Sabha or discussion society for the youth, a charitable hospital, a library, a printing press for newspapers and tracts, a night school for workers and peasants, and a ladies' society."[109]

Dhaka, as the most important city of Eastern Bengal (made the provincial capital twice, once in 1905 and again in 1947 in the twentieth century until it became the capital of independent Bangladesh in 1971), naturally was looked upon to lead in terms of development. The oldest records to mention a girls' school in Dhaka is provided by the earliest newspaper in Dhaka, the *Dacca News*, an English weekly edited by Alexander Forbes. It began publication in 1856 and in its first issue mentioned the establishment by indigenous efforts of a girls' school in 1856. Sharif Uddin Ahmed writes:

> "To the emerging group of progressives and social reformers of Dhaka the cause of female education became primary objective. The move to set up girls' schools was first made in 1856 by a small group of Brahmos. In that year Ananda Mohan Das and Babu Dina Bandhu Mallick, the Principal of the Dhaka College, W. Brennand and Head Master F. Tydd of the Collegiate School, opened a girls' school at Bangla Bazar with twenty-two students. The school soon received a government grant and financial support from a cross-section of Dhaka's inhabitants. In the same

[109] Kopf, David, *The Brahmo Samaj and the Shaping of the Modern Indian Mind*, p. 226.

year another girls' school was established at Lalbagh, chiefly supported by Dina Bandhu Mallick. Within the next few yeas more such schools were founded."[110]

Government records of 1872 mention The Bangla Bazar Girls' School as considered to be "one of the best girls' schools in Eastern Bengal.[111] According to those same government reports, the Bangla Bazar Girls' School had forty-one girls on the roll in 1872. The Secretary of the school was the Christian missionary Mr. W.B. Livingstone, but the school was conducted without any missionary objects. There was a Head Pundit, one mistress, and a third pundit. The girls usually dropped out of school at the age of ten or twelve. By that time they learn to read and write and in most cases are capable of retaining literacy. The Bangla Bazar School enjoyed a Grant-in-Aid of thirty rupees and eight annas. The report of 1872 also corroborates the existence of the Lalbagh school but mentions it as a branch of Bangla Bazar School, "...at the north end of the town, in Lalbagh so that girls of that area could attend school."[112] Usually it was not normal for a girl to traverse a long distance to attend school. The Lalbagh Girls' School, as it was called, did not, however, enjoy any grant-in-aid. It had twenty-five girls on the rolls.

The Brahmo Samaj of Dhaka, before they established the soon-to-be famous Eden School named after Lieutenant-Governor Ashley Eden, maintained a girls' school at Dail Bazar. About fifteen girls attended that school.[113] Other than exclusive girls' schools, infant girls used to attend the town *Patshalas*. In 1873 the Dhaka Brahmos established a school for adult females called the Dacca Adult Female School. In 1878 the *Brahmo Public Opinion* published with great gusto the news of the procurement of the famous Brahmica Manorama Majumdar, wife of Babu Girish Chandra, minister of the Barisal Brahmo Samaj and a teacher in the Barisal Government School as its second mistress.[114] Manorama Majumdar was the first lady in Eastern Bengal to conduct Divine Service and

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[110] Ahmed, Sharif Uddin, *Dhaka: A Study in Urban History and Development, 1840-1921* (2nd edition, Dhaka: Academic Press and Publishers Limited, 2003), p. 73 (first published: Curzon Press, London, 1986).

[111] Education (A) Proceedings for March, 1872, General Department, Education Branch, May 1872, Proceedings Nos. 93 to 102, West Bengal State Archives, India.

[112] *Ibid.*

[113] *Ibid.*

[114] Swapan Basu, *Sambad-Samayikpatre Unish Shataker Bangalisamaj: Vol. II,* [A Selection of news and articles from 19th Century Journals), p. 520.

deliver sermons in public before a congregation of men. She was ordained a missionary of the Brahmo Samaj in May 1881. In the same year as this remarkable lady Manorama Majumdar joined the Adult Female School in Dhaka, in 1878, was turned into a regular girls' school and renamed Eden Female School in honor of the then Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal. The history of the genesis of this most famous school of Eastern Bengal which, with Bethune School, was the only High English (it was recognized as a high school in 1887-88) school managed by the government well into the twentieth century was painstakingly unearthed by Sonia Nishat Amin in her seminal work *The World of Muslim Women*. The origins of the school lay in the endeavors of the Dhaka Brahmos led by Nabakanta and Brajasundar Mitra.[115] The other Brahmos were Dinnath Sen, Abhay Dutt and Kali Prashanna Ghosh. The establishment of the Adult Female School (1873) mentioned above came about under the auspices of the *Shubho Sadhini Sabha* (Philanthropic Society) which the Brahmos had established in 1870 with the aims of curbing alcohol consumption, spreading female education and spreading knowledge through distributing news journals at affordable prices.[116] The Society brought out a monthly news journal *Shubho Shadhini* to spread their ideas of reform. Although the Society ceased to exist after 1876, it had put in motion a noble deed that ultimately culminated in the creation of an institution like the Eden Female School. In 1921 the school opened a college section that opened the doors for the spread of tertiary education among the women of Eastern Bengal. It is the college section that later retained the name of Eden. The school section was merged with Kamrunnessa School in 1948.[117] The Kamrunnessa School retained its name after the merger, while the name of Eden Female School was lost forever. The name, however, in another form, lives on as the Intermediate section of the Kamrunnessa School merged with the Eden College at the same time. It is today's Eden Government Girls' College.

[115] See Amin, Sonia Nishat, *The World of Muslim Women*, pp. 151-152.
[116] See Swapan Basu, *Sambad-Samayikpatre Unish Shataker Bangalisamaj*: Vol. II, p. 690.
[117] Mentioned by Dr. Ayesha Khatun in *Satabdir Sondhikhhone Eden College* [Eden College at the Juncture of Two Centuries] (Dhaka: Eden Mahila College, 1999), p. 42.

Two decades after the establishment of the Eden Female School, it had had an enrolment of one hundred and thirty girls out of whom only one was a Muslim.[118] One hundred and five of the pupils belonged to the Hindu faith and twenty of them to the Brahmo faith. There were four girls who came from Bengali families converted to the Christian faith.[119] Two decades after the inception of the school, two girls passed the Upper Primary and two girls the Lower Primary examinations.[120] The school had no candidate for any higher examination. Of the 6,800 Rupees of expenditure that the Government had incurred for the year 1898, the sum of 176 Rupees was collected as school fees. The Annual Report thus noted with frustration that the Government expenditure was "hardly justified."[121] To encourage girls from outside Dacca to take advantage of studying at the only Government Higher English School in Eastern Bengal, Dr. Martin, the then Director of Public Instruction, on his tour of the school in 1897, felt that there should be a boarding house attached to the school and he believed that there were grounds "for hoping that the boarding house will be a success."[122] The boarding house could be opened on February 1, 1901, only when locals came forward with donations and subscriptions.[123] The boarding house opened with seven girls staying there. Immediately after it opened, the President of the Managing Committee of Eden Female School Mr. H. Savage, Commissioner of the Dacca Division, with support from Mr. A. Pedlar, the then Director of Public Instruction, applied to the Government for a grant of five Rupees per month to every boarder and resident mistress of the boarding house as the boarding house could not be expected to be self-supporting. The Government, in a letter to the DPI dated May 25, 1901, sanctioned the grant which was to be charged on the yearly Education Budget.[124] In the Narinda area, there was a school called the Naraindia Circle Girls' School which had on its rolls twenty-five girls.

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[118] Bengal Education Department (A) Proceedings, *General Report on Public Instruction in Bengal for 1898-99* (Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Press, 1899), p. 128.
[119] *Ibid.*
[120] The age group of the pupils of the Lower, Upper Primary and other classes has been discussed in Chapter 3.
[121] *Ibid.*, p. 128.
[122] Bengal Education Proceedings (A) for the month of May, 1901, File 1-H/8, No 49, National Archives of Bangladesh.
[123] Ibid. Letter from the Director of Public Instruction, Bengal, No. 139 T, dated the 6th May, 1901.
[124] Bengal Education (A) Proceedings for the month of May, 1901, File 1-H/8-2, No. 50, NA,B.

Thus it happened that it was not government initiative that spread female education in Bengal. It was the private initiative of local philanthropists. T.N. Siqueira makes a pertinent statement when he says: "Indian philanthropy – Hindu or Muslim, Parsi or Christian – is wonderfully sensitive to popular confidence and averse to State interference. Large hospitals and schools are munificently maintained by private benefactions; as soon as the Government takes charge the sources of charity begin to dry up."[125]

A Division-Wise Statistics of Schools in Eastern Bengal

According to Government reports, in the academic year 1881-1882, the Eden Female School passed eight candidates at the primary, and four candidates at the lower vernacular scholarship examination.[126] In other schools of the Dacca district, eighty candidates appeared at the Primary scholarship examination, of whom sixty-nine passed by the lower vernacular standard.[127] Among other districts, in Faridpur, five girls passed by the primary standard. In Mymensingh one girl passed by the lower standard while four more passed by the primary standard.[128]

A Division-wise statistical account of the state of female education in 1880-81 in Eastern Bengal published by The *Bamabodhini Patrika (Baishakh, 1290 B.S.)* shows that the Dacca Division had one hundred and thirty-two primary schools in 1880-1881 in which 2,441 girls attended. In the academic year 1881-1882, the number of schools increased to two hundred and thirteen and the number of pupils also increased to 3,418. Unfortunately, only four of them passed the Upper Primary and eighty-five of them passed the Lower Primary level. In Rajshahi Division, in 1880-1881, there were thirty-one schools where students 548 studied. The next year, in 1881-1882, the number of schools rose to thirty-four and the number of students increased to 749. Yet, none of them passed the Upper Primary level and only one girl passed the Lower Primary examination.

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[125] Siqueira, Thomas Nicholas, S.J., *Modern Indian Education* (Calcutta: Oxford University Press, 1960), p. 71.
[126] Government of Bengal, General Department, Education Branch A Proceedings, November, 1882, NA,B.
[127] *Ibid.*
[128] *Ibid.*

In the Chittagong Division the situation is closer to that of Dacca. One hundred and thirty schools in the Chittagong Division had on their rolls 1,558 students in 1880-1881. The following academic year the number rose to 2,161 students studying in a total of one hundred and eighty three schools. The pioneer in girls' education in the Chittagong Division was the Faizunnessa Girls' School in Comilla. The school received in grant-in-aid forty rupees per month. As the school requested an additional government grant of 25 rupees per month for the pay of a mistress in 1901, the District Board of Tipperah (now Comilla) was obliged to supply the attendance of students for the previous five years. The attendance was 58 in the academic year 1896-97, 69 in 1897-98, 63 in 1898-99, 73 in 1899-1900 and 77 in the academic year 1900-1901.[129] As the Partition of Bengal was repealed in 1911 and the government was taking stock of the condition of schools in Eastern Bengal, the Faizunnessa School was reported to have on its roll 104 girls combined in the Middle English and Lower Primary branches. The Lower Primary branch contained 70 girls and the rest were in the Middle English branch.[130] In Comilla (previously known as Tripura and spelled Tipperah in colonial records), one girl passed the middle vernacular examination. Nine girls passed the primary scholarship examination, of whom one gained a scholarship. In Noakhali, five students passed by the primary standard. In Chittagong, seven girls passed the primary standard, while three of them gained scholarship. It is worth mentioning here that in the public examinations, girls competed on equal terms with the boys. It is to be noted that although a very small number of pupils are passing examinations, a large number of pupils are attending school.

Female education of the secondary level and higher tertiary levels did not pick up before the second decade of the twentieth century in Eastern Bengal with the inclusion of a college section at the Eden High School in 1921 and the establishment of the University of Dhaka in the same year which opened its doors to women from the very beginning. The state of girls' secondary education in Eastern Bengal was in a poor state compared to West Bengal. In Dacca, the newly created capital, the Eden Female School was only one

[129] Bengal Education (A) Proceedings for the month of July 1901, File 2-G/2, 1-2, Nos. 49, NAB.
[130] Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, Education (A) Proceedings for the month of January 1912, File no. E/25-E, Nos. 53-56, NAB, Assam Secretariat Sylhet Proceedings, Serial No. 75, Bundle No. 3, List No. 4.

Government High School, and there was one other Baptist Middle Vernacular school. In Mymensingh, there were two secondary schools. Chittagong had the distinction of having a Government High School. Table 2.3 in page 73 illustrates in figures the percentage of girls that were studying in various level from the Lower Primary to the High School stage in the quinquennial review of 1907-08 to 1911-12.

Awareness about the disparity between socio-economic advancement among Hindus and Muslims had grown manifold during the Partition of Bengal in 1905 and the communal tension surrounding its annulment in 1911. Questions began to be asked what the government has done and can further do for the betterment of the demographically powerful but financially weak Muslims of Eastern Bengal. Social organizations like the Muhammedan Literary Society and a political party (the Muslim League, formed in Dhaka in 1906) was formed to voice the demands and concerns of the Muslims and the Bengal Legislative Assembly was a platform to make them heard. The condition of existing facilities for Muslim girls' education came to be known from one such question raised in the Bengal Legislative Assembly by the Hon'ble Maulvi Mazharul Anwar Cahudhuri at the meeting of the Bengal Legislative Council held on 5th August, 1914 where he wanted to know exactly how many school for Muslim girls there were in the Bengal Presidency and how much they were aided by the Government. The official reply was that the Education Department never drew any sharp demarcation between Muslim and non-Muslim schools. The following table (Table 2.4) shows the number of schools attended wholly or mainly by Muslim girls, the location of those schools and the amount of grant received, if any. To avail a grant the aspiring recipient had to show a sizeable student population, a secular curriculum proscribed by the Education Department, and the existence of trained teaching staff. A similar table for Hindu girls was not available in the records. What could be found was a distribution of girls in primary and secondary schools among Hindus, Muslims, native Christian and other minorities during the first decade of the twentieth century. Table 2.5 on page 102 carries the illustration of that distribution.

Table 2.4: The number of schools for Muslim girls in Eastern Bengal at the end of the Partition of Bengal (1905-1911).

Number of Schools	Type of School	Name of the place or district	Remarks
22	Aided by Government and Municipal funds	In the Dhaka town area	Maintained with Rs. 330 per month from government and Rs. 110 from the Municipal grant.
308	Aided by the District Board	Dhaka	Monthly grants from the Board grant varied from Rs. 1-4 to Rs.5-8.
361	Aided by the District Board	Mymensingh	Monthly Board grants varied from Rs. 1 to Rs. 6 per month.
36	Unaided schools	Mymensingh	
03	Aided by Government	Mymensingh	Received Rs. 39 per month.
109	Aided by the District Board	Faridpur	Monthly grants from the Board varied from Rs. 1 to Rs. 5.
09	Aided by Government	Faridpur	Monthly grant varied from Rs. 1 to Rs. 3.
76	Unaided Maktabs	Faridpur	
233	Aided by the District Board	Barisal	Board grants varied from Rs. 9 to Rs. 55 during the year 1913-14.
08	Aided by Government	Barisal	Government grants varied from Rs. 60 to Rs. 96 during the year 1913-14.
81	Unaided schools	Barisal	
99	Aided by the District Board	Rajshahi	Board grants varied from Rs. 1-8 to Rs. 5 a month.
04	Aided by Government	Rajshahi	
9	Unaided Maktabs	Rajshahi	
44	Aided by the District Board	Dinajpur	Grants varied from Rs. 2 to Rs. 6 per month
04	Unaided schools	Dinajpur	
03	Aided by Government	Dinajpur	
94	Aided by the District Board	Rangpur	Board grants varied from Rs. 2 to Rs. 9 per month

05	Aided by Government	Rangpur	Grant amounted to Rs. 30 per month.
09	Unaided Maktabs	Rangpur	
72	Aided by Government and the District Board	Pabna	Monthly Board grants varied from Rs. 1-8 to Rs. 4-8
10	Aided by Government	Pabna	Monthly Government grant varied from Rs. 3 to Rs. 37.
01	Unaided school	Pabna	
273	Aided by the District Board	Bogra	Monthly Board grants varied from Rs. 1 to Rs. 5.
06	Aided by Government	Bogra	
02	Unaided schools	Bogra	
216	Aided by the District Board	Comilla	Board grants varied from Rs. 1 to Rs. 8 a month.
66	Unaided schools	Comilla	
03	Aided by Government	Comilla	Government grants varied from Rs. 40 to Rs. 90 per month.
161	Aided by the District Board	Noakhali	Monthly grants from the Board varied from Rs. 1 to Rs. 6.
05	Aided by Government	Noakhali	
20	Unaided schools	Noakhali	
144	District Board Aided Schools	Chittagong	District Board grants varied from Rs. 1 to Rs. 6 a month.
13	Government and Municipal Fund Aided Schools	Chittagong	
15	Unaided Schools	Chittagong	
03	Peasant Girls' Schools	Khulna	Maintained by Government
98	Maktabs in District Boards	Khulna	Board grants varied from Rs. 2 to Rs. 5 a month.
03	Maktabs in Municipal areas	Khulna	Received Rs. 3 per month from the Municipal Fund
01	Government Aided School	Khulna	Maintained by Government
54	Aided Maktabs	Jessore	Aided by Government, the District Board and the Municipal Fund
13	Unaided Maktabs	Jessore	

Source: 'Council Question by the Hon'ble Maulvi Mazharul Anwar Chaudhuri,' Government of Bengal, General Department, Education (A) Proceedings, November, 1914, File 11-C/66, Nos. 91-93, National Archives, Bangladesh.

Table 2.5: Pupils in Secondary and Primary Schools for Girls in Eastern Bengal according to Race or Religion.

Race or Religion	1901-02						1906-07						1911-12					
	Secondary English		Secondary Vernacular		Primary		Secondary English		Secondary Vernacular		Primary		Secondary English		Secondary Vernacular		Primary	
	Nos.	%	Nos.	%	Nos.	%	Nos.	%	Nos.	%	Nos.	%	Nos.	%	Nos.	%	Nos.	%
Hindus (Brahmins & non-Brahmins	108	44.1	468	96.5	14,845	69.9	313	96.0	530	80.3	29,489	63.1	818	90.3	498	75.8	46,333	44.7
Muslims	00	00	08	1.7	5,007	23.6	09	2.8	17	2.6	16,135	34.5	49	5.4	19	2.9	55,503	53.6
Native Christians, Europeans & Eurasians	117	47.8	9	1.8	1,025	4.8	03	0.9	113	17.1	657	1.4	37	4.1	140	21.3	1,099	1.1
Others	20	8.1	00	00	354	1.7	01	0.3	00	00	489	1.0	02	0.2	00	00	672	0.6
Total	245	100	485	100	21,231	100	326	100	660	100	46,770	100	906	100	657	100	103,607	100

Source: Compiled from the Report on the Progress of Education in Eastern Bengal and Assam During the Years 1907-08-1911-12, Vol. II, Appendix Table XCIX, Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Book depot, 1913, National Archives, Bangladesh.

Table 2.6: A Comparison of the Number of Institutions for Male and Female Pupils in the Towns and Villages of Eastern Bengal.

Year	Number of Towns and Villages	Number of Institutions for Males	Percentage	Number of Institutions for Females	Percentage
1906-07	68,012	19,153	28.1	2,960	4.3
1907-08	68,102	17,587	25.8	3,451	5.0
1908-09	68,102	18,348	26.9	4,181	6.1
1909-10	68,012	17,559	25.8	4,196	6.1
1910-11	84,647	17,282	20.4	4,537	5.3
1911-12	84,647	17,600	20.7	4,987	5.8

Source: Compiled from the Report on the Progress of Education in Eastern Bengal and Assam during the years 1907-08 to 1911-12, Vol. II, Appendix Table III. Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, 1913, National Archives, Bangladesh.

The Director of Public Instruction, Mr. W.W. Hornell, with the assistance of the Inspectress of Schools Miss Broch, provided the statistics for the list of 3,031 Muslim girls' schools in the Presidency of Bengal of which 1,233 were in the Dacca Division, 701 were in the Rajshahi Division, and 639 were in the Chittagong Division. The rest of the schools were in the Burdwan and Presidency Divisions which comprise present day West Bengal. Mr. Hornell and Miss Broch both stress, however, that the list includes not only schools specifically and exclusively for Muslim girls, but also those schools in which the number of Muslim girls in attendance was considerable. The aversion of the Muslim community towards the adoption of western education had waned by the end of the nineteenth century as Sufia Ahmed and others have shown[131], but the ratio of Muslim girls going to school in comparison to Hindu girls was hugely disparate. A glance at Table 2.5 on page 102 gives a bird's eye view of the disparity that was most acutely felt when Muslim female teachers were urgently needed to staff the schools for Muslim girls as their numbers began to grow steadily in the twentieth century. The disparity between the school-going girls of the Hindu and Muslim communities continued throughout the period of this study. There was also a disparity between the number of educated males and females, which has been illustrated in Table 2.6 of the previous page.

The gradual rise of a Muslim middle class after the partition of India in 1947 translated into the rise of the number of Muslim girls in primary schools, high schools. The establishment of the University of Dacca opened the door for tertiary education for the girls of Eastern Bengal, both Muslim and Hindu. The push that the Muslim community needed for them to become aware of the backward position they had fallen into because of their late entry into the race to acquire the new education of the colonial ruler, was provided with the formation of a new province comprised of the Muslim majority population of Eastern Bengal with its capital in Dacca. The province was called Eastern Bengal and Assam and had a short life-span of six years (1905-1911). But the

[131] See Ahmed, Sufia, *Muslim Community in Bengal 1884-1912* (Dhaka: University Press Limited, 1996, 2nd edition. First edition published by Oxford University Press, Pakistan, 1974); De, Dhurjati Prasad, *Bengal Muslims in Search of Social Identity* (Dhaka: The University Press Limited, 1998); Ahmed, Rafiuddin, *Understanding the Bengal Muslims: Interpretative Essays*, (Dhaka: The University Press Limited, 2001).

impact those six years had on the politics and the psyche of the people of Eastern Bengal was far-reaching.

From our viewpoint the most enduring result of the creation of the eastern part of Bengal as a separate province was the production of a huge volume of information specific to this region resulting from a Female Education Committee was formed to advise Government on how to improve the condition of girls' education in this agricultural hinterland of Bengal. The Committee was required to formulate recommendations on the basis of an opinion poll that had taken place prior to its formation as an advisory body. The responses that came from the opinion poll provide highly interesting insider views as to how the discourse of colonial modernity played itself out on the actual field. The following chapter deals with this aspect of rhetoric versus reality in the age of high imperialism.

Chapter 3

The Partition Interlude: Work of the Female Education Committee

After the initiatives described in the previous chapter, female education in Eastern Bengal received additional impetus during the interlude of the Partition of Bengal from 1905 to 1911 when an unprecedented spate of activity developed in this field. What resulted from the Partition was a heightened activity among the Muslims for more political and economic participation, coupled with aspirations for advances in education and culture. On his pre-Partition tour of Eastern Bengal, the Viceroy Lord Curzon had touched the pulse of the people of the region by stressing the need to regain Muslim pride through greater educational attainments. This would lead to political and economic achievements.[1] As the administration of the new province of Eastern Bengal and Assam set out to justify its creation through giving fresh impetus to various social uplift schemes, the question of the state of female education in this region eventually came up for discussion. The cause of female education, in Eastern Bengal, it was found, lacked the kind of public, government and private support it had enjoyed in Calcutta and its vicinity. It was the backwardness of Eastern Bengal that had continuously contributed to the gloomy picture of the slow rate of progress shown in the figures compiled annually by the Director of Public Instruction in the of the Government of Bengal. The new Lieutenant-Governor for the new province Lancelot Hare and the newly appointed Director of Public Instruction Henry Sharp resolved to attempt a breakthrough by inaugurating a massive enquiry into female education, to be followed up with well-funded innovations. The grand reform plan involved the setting up of a powerful representative body called the Female Education Committee which was entrusted with the complete overhauling of the backward condition of female education in the region.

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[1] Speech given by Lord Curzon in Dacca on February 18, 1904, *Speeches by Lord Curzon of Kedleston*, Vol. III, (Calcutta: 1906, 302-03), cited by John R. Mclane, 'Partition of Bengal 1905: A Political Analysis' in Islam, Sirajul (ed.), *History of Bangladesh 1704-1971*, vol. 1 (Dhaka: The Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, 1992, second ed., 1997), p. 167.

The Female Education Committee, already mentioned in Chapter 1, was set up to lay down general guidelines and suggestions for the progress of female education for the government to consider. Sub-committees of the Female Education Committee were set up all over the province. The Lieutenant-Governor Lancelot Hare sought to activate a comprehensive reform program involving the local authority, the local members of the community, and also the Christian missionaries who had already been endeavoring in this field for more than half a century. Hare made the Female Education Committee a standing body to inaugurate proposals, watch their effect and advise Government on their progress. To do that, the Committee was to meet at regular intervals to consider reports from local administrative officers, institutions, and local sub-committees and submit recommendations to Government for implementation.[2] The members of the Committee were chosen by the Government, loyalty to the Raj being a crucial criterion for serving on the Committee. The Christian missionaries had a noticeable presence on the Committee. It was headed by Robert Nathan, Commissioner of Dacca Division. Among the other members, six were government officials, three big zamindars known for their interest in the cause of education, two public figures known for their loyalty to the Raj, three Christian missionary organizations and four Christian missionary female teachers.[3]

The concept of such a body to advise Government was not entirely new. A similar advisory committee was set up in the United Provinces in 1904 by Sir Harcourt Butler, Education Secretary of the UP government to devise methods for improving the state of female education in North India. The composition of that committee was different from

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[2] Lt. Governor's notes on "Consideration of a Committee to consider and advise Government upon the question of Female Education in Eastern Bengal and Assam", Bengal Education (A) Proceedings, Assam Secretariat (Sylhet Proceedings), File E-349 of April 1908, No. 125, pp. 1-2, National Archives, Bangladesh (henceforth NAB).

[3] Apart from R. Nathan who was the President of the Female Education Committee, the other members included Mr. H. Sharp, the Director of Public Instruction, Nawab Khwaja Salimullah Bahadur, Khan Bahadur Syed Nawab Ali Chowdhury, S.C. Mukherjee, Babu Jagat Bandhu Laha, Maulvi Ahsanulla, Rev. Guru Das Chakravarti, Babu Ananda Chandra Rai, Babu Jatra Mohan Sen, the Roman Catholic Mission, Dacca, Miss Williamson of Baptist Zenana Mission, Dacca, Oxford Mission, Barisal, Miss Moore, Baptist Mission School, Barisal, Miss E. Lloyd, Head Mistress, Silchar Mission School, Mrs. P. Catterjee, J.N. Roy and the Inspectress of Schools (Secretary of the Committee).

that of the committee formed in Eastern Bengal four years later. The Female Education Committee of UP was mostly composed of persons of middle class origin, educated urbanized men who were known to have contributed, in their own capacity, towards the cause of female education. This committee had prepared a detailed questionnaire to assess public opinion as to how to go about the business of educating girls, and had it sent out to 200 civil society members which action was clearly a deviation from standard imperial practice.[4] The Lieutenant-General of Eastern Bengal and Assam acquired this questionnaire, modified it slightly to suit the requirements of Eastern Bengal and had it sent out to one hundred and nine 'socially conscious' persons in May, 1907. At the first meeting of the Female Education Committee held in Dhaka at Northbrooke Hall on 26 February, 1908, the members reviewed the answers that had arrived from the recipients of the questionnaire. There were twenty-four questions in all. The Committee was required to formulate recommendations based on the replies to those questions. Historians have not paid much attention to this questionnaire save a passing reference from M.K.U. Molla.[5] But this was in actuality a significant step and the first of its kind. We can term the questionnaire an important historical document illustrating a recorded official measure vis-à-vis female education in Eastern Bengal.

The Questionnaire

The relationship between governing authorities and ideas about formulating an education system suitable for the colonizers and satisfactory to the colonized has been a perennial theme running throughout the Bengal colonial experience. The earliest Orientalist debate on education policy goes back a long time, beginning from 1820 and ending in 1835 with the triumph of the Macaulean policy. This was the time when the great Bengal intellectuals and activists like Mirza Abu Talib Khan, Rammohan Roy, Raja Radhakanta Deb, Bhavanicharan Bandopadhya, Ishwar Gupta and other luminaries took up the Herculean task of social reform. But none of them was called upon to join the

[4] For details see Minault, Gail, *Secluded Scholars: Women's Education and Muslim Social Reform in Colonial India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 167-

[5] Molla, M.K.U., 'Women's Education in Early Twentieth Century Bengal', *Bengal Studies* (East Lansing: University of Michigan, 1985).

official debate. It was un-imperial to consult a 'subject' for deciding imperial questions. With imperial arrogance the Macaulean ideology was adopted and the subjects accepted that in silence. But times changed. One finds a complete reversal of imperial attitude when, in 1907, a representative survey was conducted among 109 individuals on the basis of a questionnaire consisting of twenty-four questions to decide on how to formulate an education policy for the girls of the newly created province of Eastern Bengal and Assam. The British regime had, since the 18th century, relied on the gathering of information to understand the dynamics of the society they ruled over. The gamut of information the colonial state gathered, however, was concerned about how to extract the maximum amount of revenue and how best to administer law to maintain the colonial order.[6] The nineteenth century ushered in the age of social reform which made women visible for the first time in the discourse of colonial India. It is within this discourse of 'engagement' with the colonized that one must view the questionnaire. The twenty-four questions that are under discussion here were prepared expressly for use in the Muslim majority area of Punjab (1904) and the province of Eastern Bengal and Assam (1907). The intention here, it can be presumed, was to avoid jeopardizing the new-found friendship with the Muslim community. The Muslim community was more protective of its domestic space and caution regarding legitimacy of action seemed to be paramount in the psyche of the administration of the new province. The imperial state opted for prudence and practical understanding before engaging itself with the sensitive issue of female education.

The questions suggesting various modes of female education were circulated among 109 'socially conscious' persons, that is, those who had received an amount of western education and were driven by a desire to reform society. Only two female respondents chosen and they were Christian missionaries. Social reality was that it was the men who would decide whether or not their women members of the family would get education provided by the colonial state, and if so, how. Among the respondents, 64 were

[6] For a discussion on how British officials in early colonial Bengal attempted to gather information on Bengali society, see Jon Wilson, 'The Making of a Colonial Order: Information, Uncertainty and Law in Early Colonial Bengal', *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bangladesh* (Humanities), vol. 49, number 1, June, 2004, pp. 61-80.

Hindus, 22 Europeans and 19 Muslims.[7] All of them replied at length. Their observations make a large printed volume.[8] The observations are historically important, because they reflect the social thought and attitude to female education, both generally as well as communally. They also capture significant nuances in attitudes of Europeans and Bengalis and attitudes to female education in various districts of Eastern Bengal. Salient points from this public opinion poll of sorts must be considered in order to attempt an evaluation of the degree of consensus, disagreement, enthusiasm and skepticism prevalent among the focus group that attempted to shape the future progress in the field of women's education. The questionnaire also highlights the issues that were important then. It is given below for the convenience of subsequent analysis:

1. Whether it is possible to open with success girls' schools in large towns providing in some part, conveyance and female servants for bringing the girls to the schools.

2. Whether it is desirable to open in one or two important centers like Dacca, Mymensingh, Chittagong, etc., boarding schools in which education up to a higher standard than in ordinary schools may be imparted and in which classes for the training of teachers may also be provided?

3. Whether it is possible to have small centers in each *mahallah* or in private houses where the girls of that *mahallah* or family may meet to receive instructions from peripatetic governesses?

4. Whether it is desirable to limit attendance in these schools and centers to girls of particular castes and classes?

5. To what extent should private agency be relied on, and under what conditions as to inspection?

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[7] The overwhelming majority were Muslims in Eastern Bengal. The selection of only 19 people for responding to the questionnaire is intriguing. One explanation for such a choice may be the general apathy of the Muslim *ashraf* against female education. Both oral and documented histories suggest, while ordinary rural Muslims were too poor to afford education, the *ashraf* or elite Muslim families were ideologically against women education. While confirming Hon'ble Syed Nawab Ali Chaudhury, a large zamindar, as a member on the Committee on Female Education, the Lt Governor made a margin note remarking, "[Syed Nawab Ali Chowdhury] is very keen on education, but I am not sure how far this extends to female education." Eventually he turned out to be very enthusiastic. Notes on Education –A Proceedings, April 1908, NA, B. For Muslim *ashraf's* attidue to zenana education, see Sonia Nishat Amin, op. cit.; and Golam Murshid, op. cit.

[8] Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, Education – A, April 1908, File- E/349 of 1908, Nos. 125-143: 'Answers to Questions Relating to Female Education'.

6. Whether it would serve a useful purpose to give grants-in-aid to persons who open schools under proper guarantee as to enrolment and attendance?

7. Whether scholarships may be given to girls who study at home and do not attend any school, and, if so, the standard Lower Primary of Upper Primary that they should pass, and the amount which they should get?

8. Will the following subjects of instruction be suitable for schools? If not, what additions or alterations would you propose? ------ Reading, writing, arithmetic, household accounts, hygiene, and domestic economy, geography, history and needlework?

9. Should arrangements be made for educating Hindu and Mohammedan girls separately for the present? If so, whether it is necessary to have separate schools even for girls who pass beyond the primary stage and wish to receive higher education?

10. Whether it is desirable to impart general religious instruction in these schools, and if so, what should be the lines on which it should be given and under what conditions of superintendence and control?

11. Is there any way of making the Normal School more attractive and efficient?

12. How can teachers of the right stamp be recruited? Should the recruitment be confined to certain classes and castes?

13. Will the appointment of an influential committee to advise and help in the management of the schools, add to its popularity?

14. In what way can Peripatetic Governesses be recruited, and how best can they be educated and trained?

15. Whether it will assist the cause of female education to secure widows to be educated and trained, and if so, by what agency could this be done? What scholarship should be given to them and what conditions as to qualifications should be insisted upon?

16. Whether elderly or retired male teachers would be found suitable to make a start with in the case of small girls?

17. Whether wives of village school teachers may be given an allowance from the District Board to keep a small girls' school in connection with the boys' school wherever it is possible to do so?

18. Whether as an alternative to this, mixed primary schools of boys and girls under respectable pandits drawing a special allowance for the girls at school, are likely to be popular and successful?

19. Under what conditions must women teachers in Model and District Board schools live in order to enjoy public confidence?

20. What establishment must be provided on the premises to secure such conditions?

21. How far can the co-operation of Indian ladies be secured, and in what way?

22. Whether it will serve a useful purpose to have Committees of Indian gentlemen under the presidency of the District Officer, if necessary, in each district and large towns to superintend and further the education of girls?

23. Whether there are other ways of enlisting and organizing public help?

24. Whether you have any suggestions to make that would further the education of girls?

Source: Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings (A), File No. E-349 for April 1908, Nos. 125-143, National Archives and Library of Bangladesh.

When the Female Education Committee sat for the first time in February, 1908, they had before them the large volume of answers that had been compiled and summarized by Babu Joy Gopal De, the Assistant Inspector of Schools, Dacca Division. The questionnaire and the responses can be discussed under essentially five sections: purdah, communal attitudes, non-availability of teachers, finance and management of girls' schools, and, recommendations. The questions related to zenana education have been dealt with in chapter one and that of curriculum has been discussed in chapter four.

The Question of Purdah

From the answers to question one (whether it was possible to open with success girls' schools in large towns providing in some part, conveyance and female servants for bringing the girls to the schools), it can be discernible that whether or not girls should be

educated was not the question. The bigger question was, whether arrangements could be made so that the girls could observe purdah while attending school. In this regard, Maulvi Syed Abul Futtoh, Secretary to the Mahomedan Association Rungpur said: "Unless arrangements under strict purdah be made for the conveyance of girls to schools under the supervision of elderly and reliable female servants, such schools will not meet any success."[9] From the category of locally influential private Hindus, Babu Kishori Mohan Chaudhury, Pleader, Judges Court, Rajshahi opined: "There has been now-a-days a demand for Female Education everywhere. If conveyance, female servant, special requirements and observance of necessary class distinctions can be arranged for, there will be a rapid growth."[10] The 'special requirements' suggested by Kishori Mohan Chaudhuri were observance of purdah, undoubtedly. The same sentiment was shared by Maulvi Yaquinuddin Ahmed, Government Pleader, Dinajpur, "It is possible to open girls' schools with success if conveyance be provided to take the girls. Employment of female servants to take the girls walking through the streets of the town would not make the school successful."[11]

It appears from the majority of the answers that when the nineteenth century came to its glorious end in Bengal, the storm surrounding the question of whether women were to be given an education had settled in its favor. The Chairman of the District Board of Rajshahi, whose name has not been mentioned in the records went so far as to confidently say while responding to the questionnaire that, "The days of opposition to female education are gone."[12] The only objection was girls walking through the streets, which was, in the eyes of conservative society, violation of purdah. All persons consulted, European officers and missionaries, Hindu and Muslim gentlemen alike, thought it possible to open girls' schools in large towns with success, if conveyance and female servants were employed as chaperons. The Magistrate of Dacca Mr. B.C. Allen alone thought that in spite of all these facilities, the Muslims would not send their daughters to

[9] 'Answers to Questions Relating to Female Education', in Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam (henceforth GEBA) Education (A) Proceedings, April 1908, File-E/349 of 1908, nos. 125-143, p. 12.

[10] Ibid.
[11] Ibid., p. 17.
[12] Ibid., p. 18.

school. Reverend P.H. Moore, a missionary working in Nowgong, Assam, stated that there are serious objections to free conveyance of students at public expense, though he acknowledged that if provision of conveyance contributed to bringing more girls to school, the advantages might outweigh the objections.

The problem of girls walking in the streets every morning could be solved by providing for boarding schools where utmost purdah would be maintained. Question two elaborated the above (whether it was desirable to open in one or two important centers like Dacca, Mymensingh, Chittagong, etc., boarding schools in which education up to a higher standard than in ordinary schools may be imparted and in which classes for the training of teachers may also be provided). The solution regarding the training of teachers was unanimous. All the respondents recognized the need for training classes for female teachers. As for the necessity of boarding schools, opinion varied. In a conservative society where even the idea of girls attending a school near home was a matter of huge consideration on the part of the guardian, sending a girl to live far from home was a lot to ask indeed! The respondents felt that only Brahmo or Christian girls would consider going to a boarding school and their number was very limited. The six missionary respondents, however, advocated boarding schools because they hoped that such institutions would help to break down the *purdah* system and caste prejudices of Muslim and Hindu girls. The unanimous view was that boarding schools for girls would not be successful in Assam as caste prejudices in that region were very strong. It may be mentioned here that on an experimental basis, on February 1 in 1901, a boarding house was opened in connection with the Eden Female School in Dacca with seven girls as the first boarders.[13]

The perceived threat of women as sexual beings is ever present in the male psyche, thus the control over women's sexuality lies at the very core of patriarchal domination. The creation of the notion of 'respectability' is an important component of

[13] Letter from A. Pedlar, Esq., Director of Public Instruction, Bengal, to the Secretary to the Govt. of Bengal, soliciting sanction to a grant of Rs. 5 a month for each boarder and resident mistress of the boarding house attached to the Eden Female School. General Dept., Education Branch, Education A Proceedings for the month of May, 1901, File 1-H/8, no. 49, NAB.

domination as it puts considerable restraints on woman's mobility. Under colonial rule, patriarchy is strengthened by the colonized male's loss of power in the public sphere.[14] That leads to a heightened exertion of power on his part, in the private sphere. As Ashworth Georgina puts it, "Male control of the female becomes more and more significant in the search for a political identity that will be headed by power-holders. It requires women to express submission in order to 'belong' to, or to 'deserve' the protection of, the community."[15] The respectability or acceptability of teachers was of utmost importance, which was the reason why question nineteen asked: 'Under what conditions must women teachers in Model and District Board schools live in order to enjoy public confidence?' A government pleader and Member of the Legislative Council, Eastern Bengal and Assam, the Hon'ble Rai Dulal Chandra Deb Bahadur of Sylhet considered 'chastity' as the highest parameter by which to judge a female teacher. The teacher, he says, if she be a married woman, must live with her husband. He also added that chastity in a woman was the only way for her to win public confidence and that he did not know any means which could be devised to make a woman chaste if she did not wish to be so.[16] Babu Kali Prasanna Chakravarty, a talukdar, felt that female teachers, in order to enjoy public confidence, must live in the style in which other respectable or orthodox ladies of the *Mahalla* lived.[17] Babu Navanath Barua, Siristadar of Nowgong, Assam also thought that teachers should live in such a manner as will create least suspicion. They should not allow male visitors to visit their houses under any circumstances. Male visitors visiting the school should be allowed under strict rules.[18] The Secretary of Tezpur Girl's High School (of Assam), Babu Mon Mohan Lahiry commented that the female teachers must live in decent style. They must not freely mix

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[14] See Chakravarty, Dipesh, *Provincializing Europe: Post-Colonial Thought and Historical Difference* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001), Majumdar, Rochona, *Marriage and Modernity: Family Values in Colonial Bengal* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2009.)

[15] Ashworth, Georgina (ed.), A Diplomacy of the Oppressed: New Directions in International Feminism (London: Zed Books Ltd.,1995, p. 20.

[16] 'Proceedings of the meeting of the Female Education Committee for Eastern Bengal and Assam', p. 225.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Ibid., p. 226.

with men and must not move publicly from house to house on foot.[19] It was the Secretary of Alexander Girls' High School of Mymensingh, Mr. J.M. Das who presented a well-balanced judgment when he opined: "It is purity of character and not any particular mode of living that the people require. Such matters must be left to be determined by the school committee with reference to the circumstances of each locality."[20]

In the missionary historian Ruth Brouwer's[21] opinion, the Christian missionaries who came to India from the United Kingdom, USA or Canada, irrespective of denomination, were transformed by Indian culture and adapted themselves to the needs of the people they served. The missionaries did not embark on bringing radical change in social customs, concentrating just on personal beliefs. Thus their answers to the question on how female teachers could gain respectability did not differ from the answers given by local patriarchs. Miss E.M. Lloyd, a missionary working in Silchar, Assam, wrote that if the teachers did not live with their parents or guardians, a house should be provided for them on the school compound.[22] The Rev. P.H. Moore of Nowgong agreed that living with a husband, a parent, or other relatives was the best safeguard against the suspicion that pervades society at large. Here one encounters the outright mention that society was deeply suspicious regarding the intentions of women. Reverend J. Pengwern Jones of Sylhet wrote that if the female teachers lived with any respectable person in charge, or, better still, a man and wife in charge, the public would be satisfied. Miss E.M. Williamson of the Baptist Zenana Mission of Dhaka gave her opinion: "In towns women teachers should live together in a town, controlled by a responsible local committee. In the villages, only married women whose husbands are free to take the oversight of the home, and hold a respectable position in the community, will be employed."[23] The responses of the Christian missionaries from Europe demonstrates a sympathetic understanding of the society they were working in and shows how careful they were not

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[19] Ibid., p. 224
[20] Ibid., p. 225.
[21] Brouwer, Ruth Compton, *New Women for God: Canadian Presbyterian Women and India Missions, 1876-1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990).

[22] Op. cit., p. 224.
[23] Ibid.

to upset the delicate balance between their mission to proselytize and yet maintain a secular position as far as social reforms were concerned.

The general response from the nine Muslim gentlemen[24] who were selected to give their opinion was that female teachers "...should live with at least some members of their families in quarters provided for them in or near the school compound. They may also live in the house of some relative if any, or respectable person of the locality, but in no case must they live alone."[25] The Magistrate of Dhaka, B.C. Allen, Esq. ICS, summed up the predicament of the female teacher: "If they live as they do in the Eden Girls' School in a body together under a respectable lady superintendent they enjoy every confidence. It would also do if Brahmos or native Christians lived in some respectable Hindu family."[26] What was apparent here was that a woman living alone could never be an option if she sought respectability.

Question twenty somewhat overlapped with the previous question as it asked: 'What establishment must be provided on the premises to secure such conditions?' Most of the answers were similar to that of the answers to question nineteen. The final verdict was that female teachers must live under *purdah*, in free quarters attached to the school with female servants or in the house of respectable families under the control of the Managing Committee. Only by restricting the movements of women who ventured out into the public space and by placing them under strict surveillance could society hope to restrain the 'new woman' created by colonial modernity. Women who broke the shackles of the 'old patriarchy' by acquiring education fell victim to a 'new patriarchy' that

[24] They were, the Hon'ble Khan Bahadur Syed Nawab Ali, a zamindars and Member of the Legislative Council of Eastern Bengal and Assam, Nawab Syed Abdus Sobhan Chowdhury, Nawab of Bogra, Maulvi Syed Abdul Majid, President of *Anjuman Islamia*, Maulvi Musharruf Hossain, Pleader and Vice-Chairman of the Jalpaiguri Municipality, Maulvi Nuruddin Ahmed, Member of the Local Board, Nowgong, Maulvi Yaquinuddin Ahmed, Government Pleader, Dinajpur, Maulvi Fazlul Haq, who in 1923 would become the first Indian Education Minister of Bengal, and subsequently Chief Minister, Maulvi Kutubuddin Ahmed and Maulvi Momtazuddin Ahmed.

[25] 'Answers to Questions Relating to Female Education', p.228.
[26] Ibid., p. 218.

insisted on women being maintained in a dependent and subordinate status within Indian society.[27]

The Communal Issue

A non-confrontational communal relation between the Hindus and the Muslims, the two major communities had always existed in the socio-cultural life of Bengal. However, religion distinguished these two communities and each community had its own class structure, its own rites and rituals, literature and philosophy.[28] As indigenous education developed under the auspices of religious institutions like the temple and the mosque, educational institutions of the two communities developed on segregated communal lines as well. There were Pathshalas and Tols for Hindus and Madrassahs and Maktabs for Muslims. They followed entirely different curricula, taught in the Sanskrit language by Hindu *pundit*s in the former and in the Persian and Arabic languages by Muslim *munshi*s and *maulvi*s in the latter.[29] One of the drastic changes that were introduced by the education system of the colonial period was the one where Hindus and Muslims came to study under they same roof, with the same curriculum and were taught by the same teachers. The western style schools were the first site where the Hindu and the Muslim congregated together. Hence the question (question no. 9): 'Should arrangements be made for educating Hindu and Mohammedan girls separately for the present? If so, whether it is necessary to have separate schools even for girls who pass beyond the primary stage and wish to receive higher education?'

Opinions are almost equally divided regarding separate arrangements for the education of Hindu and Muslim girls. The missionary response unanimously opposed

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[27] For details on the discourse of woman's agency and identity formation, see Judith Walsh, *Domesticity in Colonial India: What Women Learned When Men Gave Them Advice* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004).

[28] See Islam, Sirajul, 'Communal Relations' in Islam, Sirajul (ed.), *Banglapedia: National Encyclopedia of Bangladesh*, vol. 3, pp. 81-85.

[29] For details see Shahidullah, Kazi, *Patshalas into Schools: The Development of Indigenous Elementary Education in Bengal, 1854-1905* (Kolkata: Firma KLM Private Limited, 1987) and, Md. Abdullah Al Masum, *Banglar Muslim Samajey Adhunik Sikshar Agragoti* (The Spread of Modern Education in the Bengali Muslim Society, 1885-1921), Dhaka: Bangal Academy, 2007.

separation as that would, in their opinion, only serve to emphasize the difference already existing between the two communities. The missionaries noted that hitherto they found no difficulty in teaching Hindus, Muslims and Christians together. But then again, we must keep in mind that the missionaries could not bring Hindu and Muslim girls of the upper classes to their schools. The desire to maintain spatial difference was most profound among members of the aristocratic class. However, British officials were divided in their opinion. The Commissioner of Rajshahi, F.C. Henniker, the Magistrate of Dacca, B.C. Allen, the Magistrate of Noakhali, J.G. Dunlop, the Magistrate of Rungpur, J. Vas and the Commissioner of Assam Valley and Hill Districts were of the opinion that Muslims would prefer separate schools. According to Dunlop, separate schools should be provided. Muslim girls would seldom attend a school beyond the primary stage more specially if the teacher be a male and a Hindu, he added.[30] The Magistrate of Tipperah (present day Comilla) F.W. Strong said, "Muslim girls rarely attend schools and will generally have to be provided for in private houses. When they are willing to attend a school Hindus and Muslims can, I think, be taught together without inconvenience."[31] Other British officials who saw no reason for separate arrangements were the Deputy Commissioner of Kamrup, Assam, Major D. Herbert, Deputy Commissioner of Cachar, Assam, F.C. French, The Commissioner of Chittagong, H. Luson and the Magistrate of Dinajpur, F.W. Strong. There were thirty-three Hindu and four Muslim officials among the respondents. What Dr. P. Chatterjee, Inspector of Schools on Special Duty, the influential physician felt was that the difficulty in educating Muhammedan girls did not lie bringing them to schools where Hindu girls preponderate, but in bringing them to schools at all.[32] Most of the Hindu officials agreed with Dr. Chatterjee, showing that they understood the root of the problem. A liberal view was proffered by Babu Srijut Nava Nath Baruah, Siristar, Criminal Court, Nowgong, Assam when he said that separate arrangement may not be necessary in large centers. It was not advisable to foster separation between the two races and in the case of higher education girls of both Hindu and Muslim communities should receive instruction in the same institution.[33] An opposite

[30] 'Answers to Questions Relating to Female Education', p. 101.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Babu Joy Gopal De's Report on Female Education, GEBA A Proceedings, April 1908, No. 125, p. 3.
[33] Op. Cit., p. 108.

pragmatic view, given the circumstances, was held by Babu Paramanonda Biswas, a respondent in the private Hindu gentleman category who opined that in small centers and *Mahallas* it would not be easy to bring Hindu and Muslim girls together. So separate arrangements would be more suitable.[34]

Among the nine persons in the private Muslim gentlemen category, Maulvi Fazlul Haq, who was to become the Chief Minister of Bengal later in life, thought that there should be separate schools for the two communities beyond the primary stage. The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur Syed Nawab Ali, zaminder of Dhanbari, Tangail and Member of the Legislative Council of Eastern Bengal and Assam, along with Nawab Syed Abdus Sovan Chaudhury, the Nawab of Bogra and Maulvis Musharruf Hossain and Nuruddin Ahmed of Jalpaiguri and Nowgong respectively, saw no need for separate schools. Predictably, the President of *Anjuman Islamia* Maulvi Syed Abdul Majid opted for separate schools, as did two other respondents. Analysis shows that among the total number of respondents, 29 were for separate arrangements at all stages, 23 for separate arrangements at primary stages only, 2 for separate arrangements beyond the primary stage, and 54 were opposed to separate arrangements altogether. A similar problem was to arise on the question of zenana education.

As a successful alternative to institutional education that suited the social-cultural necessity of Bengal, the zenana education system had received the greatest impetus from government in 1903-04. That was when the *Mahallah* system, also called the Central Gathering system was introduced whereby girls of a *mahallah* (or neighborhood) would gather at a private house in that area to receive instruction from a peripatetic governess. The idea was to minimize the effort of the peripatetic governess and maximize the outcome by having many girls to teach on one visit. That led to the question (question number four) whether it was desirable to limit attendance in these schools and centers to girls of particular castes and classes. This question was nuanced in a very sensitive manner because it alluded to not just the caste division among the Hindus, but also the class sensitiveness among the upper class Muslims. Thus all but two Muslim respondents

[34] Ibid., p. 109.

said that girls from only the respectable classes should be allowed in the center where girls would gather to study. Question number four has been presented in summary form while discussing zenana education in Chapter 1. Here we shall discuss it from the perspective of communal relations among the two major communities of Hindus and Muslims in Bengal.

As we have learned earlier, forty-six opinions were in favor and fifty-two opinions were opposed to any restriction being imposed upon the admission of Hindu and Muslim girls to the same school. The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur Nawab Ali Chowdhury (Choudhuri in colonial documents) was very diplomatic with his answer. He and three other gentlemen opined that the matter could be left to the joint discretion of the master of the house and the peripatetic governess. On the other hand, the District Magistrate of Dacca, taking into account the concentration of the Muslims of the higher *ashraf* class in the city, and some other European and Muslim gentlemen thought that the Muslims want their girls to be taught separately and would even object to the presence of low class Muslim girls in the same school. The District and Sessions Judge of Rajshahi and a few other Muslim gentlemen did not agree with them on this point.

B.C. Allen, the Magistrate of Dacca was of the opinion that Muslims wanted their girls taught separately from Hindus, and would object to the presence of low class Muslim girls. It was his opinion that Hindus were tolerant and would not object to Muslim and even low class Hindu girls.[35] This opinion was not substantiated by the Hindu respondents. Directly opposing B.C. Allen, Babu Jogindra Chandra Chakravarty, Pleader of Dinajpur replied that female education, to be made popular and attractive, should be so arranged that there might be separate arrangements for Muslim and Hindu girls. Not only that, in the case of Hindus again, there ought to be separate arrangements for higher class and lower class Hindu girls.[36] Similarly, another respondent from the list of private Hindu gentlemen answered, "...respectable people will certainly object to their

[35] 'Answers to Questions Relating to Female Education', p. 42.
[36] Ibid., p. 50.

girls being educated with those of low class."[37] Babu Kishori Mohan Chaudhury, Pleader, Judges' Court, Rajshahi had a more nuanced suggestion: "Class prejudices and caste distinction should have to be looked after and suitable arrangements shall have to be made, as the circumstance of each case may require."[38]

The Magistrate of Dinajpur F.W. Strong, who was also officiating as Magistrate of Tipperah joined the magistrate of Dacca by saying that Hindu and Muslim girls should be kept separate. No other distinction would be necessary, except to include sweepers and others of the lowest classes.[39] The most persuasive and clear reply came from Rai Kali Prasanna Ghose, Bahadur, author and landholder, Dacca, who says, "The low class girl should not be allowed to take admission into private Pathshalas and to sit with girls of the three respectable castes in Eastern Bengal, i.e., Brahman, Kyestha and Baidya."[40] It might be noted here that not a single member of the lower classes of Hindus or Muslims were consulted for their opinion.

Religion was the most readily identifiable criterion for distinguishing between the two major communities and their mutual relations in Bengal. It gave the two communities their distinctive socio-cultural systems and sub-systems, their rites and rituals, their literature and their philosophy. It guided family values and social norms. Hence it was pertinent to ask (question 10) whether religious instruction would be imparted at schools as the school going years are the formative stage of a person's life. The answers have been analyzed in the following chapter which deals with school curriculum.

The Non-Availability of Teachers, Trained or Untrained

Bengal Education Department records throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century are replete with references of Directors of Public Instruction (DPI) and Inspectors of schools stating the lack of trained female teachers a major impediment to the spread of

[37] Ibid., p. 49.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Ibid., p. 44.
[40] Ibid., p. 51.

girls' education in Bengal. An assessment by Mr. Henry Sharp found that the lack of mistresses, trained or untrained, no training arrangements for mistresses and no Inspectress of Schools was "the most urgent question of all and one which must be dealt with at once."[41] A teachers' training facility would be attached to the Eden Female School, the only government funded English High School in Eastern Bengal, in 1907. Prior to that, the work of training, in whatever form that might have been, was undertaken entirely by the various missionary bodies working in Bengal, for placement in mission schools. The Director of Public Instruction Mr. A.W. Croft had noted in 1878 that the social classes from which teachers could be recruited were limited to two: Native Christians and Brahmos, chiefly the former.[42] The situation had remained unchanged after more than two decades of that statement. As early as 1863, a Female Normal School was opened in Dhaka to train female teachers.[43] After operating for almost a decade, on the recommendation of the then Inspector of Schools in Bengal for the South-East Division, C.B. Clarke, who would later become the Director of Public Instruction, the government closed the training school for female teachers on 31st July, 1872 on the grounds that no trainees were available.[44] Yet, the Report on Public Instruction for 1869-70 records that twenty Hindu widows, of whom fifteen were from the "lower ranks" and five were from the "middle ranks" had trained in that institution.[45] As far as records can trace, Radhamani Debi, one of the first graduates of the Dacca Female Normal School, was appointed as a teacher at Sherpur Girls' School in 1866, on a monthly salary of thirty rupees.[46] Even before that, one of the first recorded instances of a lady in Eastern Bengal

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[41] Letter from H. Sharp, Esq., M.A., Director of Public Instruction, Eastern Bengal and Assam, to the Chief Secretary to the Govt. of Eastern Bengal and Assam, dated Shillong, the 13th September, 1906, General Department, Education Branch A Proceedings (Assam Secretariat), List 4, Serial 73, Bundle 1, January, 1906 to March, 1908, NA,B, Dhaka.

[42] Letter from A.W.Croft, Esq., Offg. Director of Public Instruction to the Secretary to the Govt. of Bengal, General Department Education Consultations, A Proceedings, July 1878 to July 1879.

[43] Ahmed, Sharifuddin, *Dhaka: Itihas O Nagar Jibon, 1840-1921* [Dhaka: History and Urban Life, 1840-1921] (Dhaka: Academic Press & Publishers Ltd., 2001), p. 82. Training schools for teachers were called Normal School.

[44] Government of Bengal, General Department Education Branch A Proceedings for 1872 Nos. 60-61, West Bengal State Archives, Kolkata.

[45] General Report on Public Instruction in the Lower Provinces of the Bengal Presidency, 1869-1870, p. 222, cited in, Meredith Borthwick, *The Changing Role of Women in Bengal, 1849-1905* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), p. 315.

[46] Borthwick, Meredith, The Changing Role of Women in Bengal, p. 317.

taking up a teaching job was that of Bamasundari Debi of Pabna.[47] She also trained other girls to become *zenana* teachers. Another pioneering lady of the early generation who took up teaching as a profession in the 1860s was Monorama Majumdar who worked in Barisal. She had to face a great deal of hostility on account of being a preacher in the Brahmo Samaj, the first woman preacher, according to available records.[48] In 1878 she took up the position of second mistress at the newly established Eden Government Female School in Dhaka.

When question number twelve asked how teachers of the 'right stamp' could be recruited and whether the recruitment should be confined to certain classes and castes, it was obvious that the fact that options were extremely limited was not taken into account. In answer to this vital question, B.C. Allen, the Magistrate of Dhaka summed up the problem thus: "Teachers are very difficult to get. Hindus are practically out of the question. Brahmos are quite suitable, but supply is limited. Native Christians are fairly numerous. Something might be done by buying little Christian girls from their parents and training them up at Boarding schools. Muslim female teachers might possibly be obtained from Behar."[49] The suggestion of "buying little Christian girls from their parents" is appalling to the senses. But conversions into Christianity happened mostly among the poorest of the poor. How the Christian conversion worked and to what extent the missions went to procure such conversions has not been looked into in this study. A.W. Botham, Deputy Commissioner of Sibsagar noted that while supply was so small, very liberal time should be offered for suitable teachers and recruitment need not be restricted to any particular class or caste.[50] It was quite understandable that the European respondents would have no class and caste preferences, but that kind of leniency could not be expected of the more orthodox Hindu and Muslim respondents. Maulvi Ahsanullah, Officiating Inspector of the Chittagong Division claimed that preference

[47] Ray, Bharati (ed.) *Sekaler Narishiksa: Bamabodhini Patrika, 1270-1329 Bangabda* [Women's Education of Those Times: *Bamabodhini Patrika*, 1270-1329 Bengali Calendar], Kolkata: Kolkata University Women's Studies Research Centre, 1994, p. 29. One has to add either 606 or 607, depending on the Bengali month or date to the year of the Bengali Calendar to find the corresponding year of the Gregorian Calendar (AD).
[48] Meredith Borthwick, p.316.
[49] 'Answers to the Questions Related to Female Education', p. 137.
[50] Ibid., p. 140.

should be given to candidates of the same caste to which the majority of the girls under instruction belonged.[51] A well thought opinion was offered by an officer of the Education Department, Babu Rajeswaar Gupta who was the Head Master of the Rangpur Training School. In his opinion, teachers of the right stamp could be recruited if: (a) the pay was attractive; (b) schools were set up in selected places; (c) the female teachers were allowed to be absent during the time of inspection by male Inspectors.[52] Liberal pay was suggested by the Deputy Commissioner of Kamrup, Major D. Herbert as well. The retired Assistant of Schools for Dacca, Babu Kumud Bandhu Bose also thought that adequate remuneration would bring in a fair supply of qualified female teachers. As a retired school Inspector, it can be assumed that he was speaking from the position of an informed respondent. However, his colleague, Babu Nava Kishore Sen, retired Deputy Inspector of Schools for Brahmanbaria thought that for the present, the Christian and Brahmo communities were the only communities where female teachers could be looked for.[53] Reverend Mr. Hamilton of Rajshahi considered *Vaishnavis* most unsuitable for teaching posts. Conservative society was suspicious about the morality of the *Vaishnavis*. They were considered too libertarian for the taste of orthodox Hindus and Muslims. The Commissioner of Rajshahi, Mr. F.C. Henniker advised patient search and enquiry to find teachers of the 'right stamp'. He proposed recruitment of European ladies trained in England and retired male teachers of 'good character' for teaching girls' schools.

The most pragmatic way of solving the problem of the dearth of teachers was to look for alternatives to trained teachers. Thus whether it would assist the cause of female education to secure widows to be educated and trained, and if so, by what agency (question 15) and, whether elderly or retired male teachers would be found suitable for the job of teaching small children (question 16) were issues brought on the table. That the services of widows and retired male teachers would be of great value was acknowledged by all the respondents. Regarding widows, however, most respondents thought that under the present state of Hindu and Muslim societies, no widow would come forward in search of work and volunteer for training. As for the service of elderly male teachers, the Head

[51] Ibid.
[52] Ibid., p. 141.
[53] Ibid.

Master of the Dacca Madrassah Maulvi Zahirul Haq rightly pointed out that that was in fact the agency by which the girls have traditionally received religious instruction in the numerous madrassahs all around the province, so there should be no objection in using the option in formal schools.

Question seventeen was concerned about whether wives of village school teachers may be given an allowance from the District Board to keep a small girls' school in connection with the boys' school wherever it was possible to do so. To that, the respondents rightly pointed out that wives of village school masters were not necessarily educated. However, where the wives were educated, the majority of opinion was in favour of giving them an allowance to keep a small girl's school in connection with the boys' school. The missionary ladies and gentlemen unanimously vetoed this idea. Some Hindu and Muslim gentlemen also did not approve of the scheme on the grounds that it involved either the neglect of house-hold duties or of the school, usually the latter. When the matter was presented to the Female Education Committee for a solution to be found, the Committee decided that the greatest hope of obtaining village school mistresses was to be found in the male teachers' female relatives. To entice male teachers into training their female relatives to qualify for a teaching job, a reward of 100 rupees was to be awarded for every successful candidate. A training school was to be opened in Comilla at a monthly recurring expenditure of 800 rupees. The Committee also recommended that female teachers be paid more than male teachers because she would have to make arrangements for a male or elderly female relative to live with her and that would mean additional expenditure.

Another alternative solution to the problem was, mooting the idea of mixed primary schools of boys and girls under respectable pundits who would draw a special allowance for the girls (question 18). Most of the private Hindu and Muslim civilians opposed the idea. The officials of the Education Department, on the other hand, not unsurprisingly, supported it wholeheartedly, as they were acutely aware that ground realities would not change overnight, that the girls' schools could not be staffed entirely with female teachers in the immediate future. The supporters of the idea, however,

insisted on separate rooms for the girls so that *purdah* could be maintained. Any suggestion that did not comply with the social norms of the times was bound to fail.

Finance and Management

In the final analysis, norms and attitudes apart, the economic aspect of providing for female education is a crucial factor. Mr. A. Majid, District Sessions Judge of Rajshahi, correctly pointed out that female education on a large scale was ultimately a question of funds. A large allotment from government for the purpose was essentially required. Another respondent to the questionnaire, Babu Chandra Kishore Kar, Honorary Magistrate of Bazidpur, Kishoreganj persuasively felt: "There are at present several organizations such as Mymensingh Sanmilani, Tippera Sanmilani, etc., under the absolute control of the educated Hindus and Muhammedans, by which female education is being slowly pushed forward, but these noble institutions lack proper encouragement and patronage from the Government, and if these institutions are liberally financed and patronized by the Government and the promoters of these institutions are taken into confidence and be given freedom of action, then these pioneer organizations of female education may thrive and be remodeled and their stability insured."[54] The all-important question of how to finance female education was virtually left out of the purview of the survey. In the words of the Commissioner of Sibsagar, Assam, "Female education is a delicate plant, and every concession which would tend to encourage it should be made."[55] It was uncertain, however, from where the concessions for the "delicate plant" would be forthcoming, if coming at all.

The management of female education, on the other hand, found importance in the survey. An important part of management was the maintenance of the proper standards of education and regular inspection. It has been mentioned earlier that the institutionalization of zenana education in a standardized form was one of the priorities of the new government of Eastern Bengal and Assam due to the popularity of this form of

[54] Ibid., p. 278.
[55] Ibid., p. 24.

education in this region. Zenana education had proliferated for many decades without any government control. Taking advantage of the lack of inspection, Christian missionaries had concentrated on proselytization through Bible studies in the zenana instead of any real form of education. There was also no structured curriculum, no standard primers and consequently no real progress in education. The lack of inspection also gave rise to the uncontrolled growth of private peripatetic agencies where the teachers employed were of extremely low standard, and in some instances with no qualification whatsoever to teach. The heightened attention towards zenana education was manifest in the government's intention to pay grant-in-aid to private zenana agencies and extend scholarship to zenana pupils, thus subjecting them to supervision and inspection. Thus question five of the questionnaire was a very pertinent one as it asked to what extent should private agency be relied on, and under what conditions as to inspection.

The majority of the respondents, not surprisingly, were of the opinion that private agencies can be allowed to manage schools, conduct examinations and perform other such work as are generally performed by managing committees of schools, but they must perform under the full control of the Education Department and their work must be supervised by government Inspecting Officers. By the end of the nineteenth century nationalist and anti-Christian sentiment had become quite strong in Bengal. The nationalistic bias came through in Srijut Krisnapran Cangkakoti's statement. He was an Honorary Magistrate of Sibsagar, Assam, and held positions like Revenue Superintendent of the Deputy Commissioner's Office, Sibsagar, Member of the Local Board, Sibsagar and, President of the Temple Committee of Sibsagar, among others. Cangkakoti felt that in order to make female education popular, everything that had a denationalizing tendency should be avoided. No Missionary should be allowed to teach in schools. The officers of the Education Department, he strongly felt, should always be in touch with the public opinion.[56]

Question 13 of the questionnaire asked whether an influential committee to advise and help in the management of the schools would aid the cause of female education. The

[56] Ibid., p. 277.

missionaries strongly opposed this. By 'influential committee', it was clearly understood that it would be composed of local gentlemen. Thus the Reverend Dr. Mead of Faridpur pleaded that the Magistrate should have the power of nominating the managing committee; otherwise, his genuine concern was that missionaries would nowhere have any chance of getting involved in the management of any school. Another missionary, Miss Lloyd of Silchar, Assam, would not consent to placing any mission school under such a committee. Except for the opposing voice of the missionaries, there was unanimity of opinion regarding an influential committee among Hindu and Muslim respondents. The issue of managing committees of Indian gentlemen was raised again in question number 22 and again the vote was almost unanimously in favor. Babu Asvini Kumar Dutta, a zamindar of Barisal, however, pointed out that despite the usefulness of such committees, these gentlemen should not visit these institutions.[57] The norms of purdah would not allow such liberty.

Recommendations

Answers to the questions 21, 23 and 24 came pouring in with recommendations about how to secure the co-operation of Indian ladies, enlist public help and advance the progress of female education in this region. It may be noted that no Indian lady or representative of the minority communities or any person from the non-*bhadralok* class was selected to participate in this significant survey. This points to the gendered and elitist nature of the survey.

Most of the respondents considered it doubtful whether female cooperation could be secured but the few officers who were optimistic about securing the cooperation of Indian ladies suggested various means to do so. Among these were: (a) making the *bhadramahilas* honorary visitors of schools and members of the school Committees; (b)

[57] Letter from Babu Joy Gopal De, Assistant Inspector of Schools, Dacca Division, to the Director of Public Instruction, Eastern Bengal and Assam, GEBA, Education A Proceedings, April 1908, No. 125, p. 5, NAB.

inviting the *bhadramahilas* to different ceremonies, like prize distribution;[58] (c) holding meetings of *bhadramahilas* from time to time to discuss the condition of female education and ways of progress; (d) approaching husbands or male relatives of *purdanashin* ladies to induce them to take an interest in the spread of female education;[59] (e) seeking cooperation of the wives of zamindars and *Ranis* who were zamindars in their own right. The wives of officers should be asked likewise; and, finally, (f) remunerating the *bhadramahilas* for their service would provide an incentive.

The Commissioner of the Chittagong Division had a correct understanding of the socio-economic and cultural situation of Eastern Bengal when he said that much could not be expected of the general public. It was mainly the job of the Government to establish schools and manage them or grant generous aid packages to develop female education. Some other suggestions which were not necessarily well thought out or practical ones were as follows:[60]

(a) forming committees of elderly women to look after the improvement of female education;
(b) giving prizes to ladies who take interest in female education;
(c) forming committees of gentlemen interested in the advancing of female education to manage girls' schools;
(d) imposition of an education tax and giving tax-payers the right to control the schools;
(e) holding periodical meeting for distribution of prizes;
(f) publication of literature on subjects relating to female education and free distribution of such literature through the school inspectors.

As pointed out above, the development of female education depended on two vital elements: a large allocation of funds from government, and, the removal of social prejudices and customs such as, the early marriage of girls and the strictness of

[58] The presence of Mrs. P.K. Roy can be seen in records of reports of the Inspectors and Inspectresses.
[59] It was the prerogative of the husbands and male relatives to allow ladies to contribute in the public arena.
[60] Letter from Babu Joy Gopal De, Assistant Inspector of Schools, Dacca Division, to the Director of Public Instruction, Eastern Bengal and Assam, pp. 5-6.

purdah. To stop the "pernicious" custom of early marriage, withholding of scholarship to boys who married early was proposed. The Commissioner of the Rajshahi Division urged that providing employment for educated women would be a powerful if indirect stimulant to education.

By 1907, when the survey was conducted, official intervention in the matter of female education seemed natural of a Bengal that had experienced a hundred years of social reform initiated by the middle class. It was up to the Female Education Committee to formulate specific recommendations and up to Government to implement them.

The Work of the Female Education Committee

Armed with the backing of a referendum of sorts, the Committee could take up the work of reorganizing the system of female education with the knowledge of full support from all quarters – government and non-government. All sub-committees had their work spelled out for them and on the basis of the reports they compiled, the FEC sat every year, in 1909, 1910 and for the last time in 1911 to review and formulate concrete recommendations for the improvement of female education in Eastern Bengal. The scheduled meeting of 1912 could not be held because the Partition had been annulled in 1911. The Committee took note of all the recommendations that the survey had produced. Basically these may be categorized under the following heads: financial incentive for teachers, suitable curriculum and primers for students, financial incentive and better management of zenana education, fund allocations for model schools and, assurance of the maintaining of purdah. As the previous chapter has discussed zenana education and the following chapter takes up the issue of the curriculum and text books, here it we shall look into the matter of female teaching staff and financial assistance for establishing new schools.

The Quest for Female Teaching Staff

The demand for teachers greatly exceeded the supply in the first half of the twentieth century. The Female Education Committee had recommended to the government that at least ten new primary schools of an improved type in each district and one good secondary school at the headquarters of those districts, either a middle vernacular school or an English school be set up on an urgent basis. Immediately then, the problem of how to staff those schools became a major concern. Hiring elderly male teachers was a plausible option initially, but eventually all girls' schools had to, on principle, be entirely staffed by female teachers. The Female Education Committee, to make do with the available resources at hand, decided not to raise the qualification bar high. To qualify for the post of a head mistress in a secondary school, a very suitable mistress would be, the Committee decided, a lady who had read up to the Middle Vernacular standard and had preferably received training in a special training school.[61] She should be paid 40 rupees, 2 annas and 50 paisas a month. As for the rest of the female teaching staff, the ordinary rule to be observed was that, the mistresses should have studied at least one stage higher than the girls they were to teach. Accordingly, the second mistress should have read up to the middle vernacular standard or its equivalent and would be paid 30 rupees per month; the third mistress should have read up to the upper primary or its equivalent and be paid 25 rupees a month and the fourth and fifth mistresses should have read up to the lower primary or its equivalent, and be paid 20 rupees a month. There was no provision for the teaching of English at a Middle Vernacular school and special arrangement would have to be made should the demand for English teaching arise.[62]

The more tenacious effort had to go into creating an environment that would attract women to join as primary school teachers as the greater demand was at the primary level education. The task of recruiting teachers entailed a three-fold procedure.

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[61] The Middle Vernacular course consisted of classes V, VI and VII.

[62] Proceedings of the meeting of the Female Education Committee for Eastern Bengal and Assam, held at Dacca on the 26th of February, 1908, Assam Secretariat (Sylhet Proceedings), Education Department, File No. E/946 of 1909, NA,B.

First, enquiries needed to be made to ascertain whether women educated up to the upper primary standard[63] or its equivalent were willing to take service in schools. Secondly, the prospects and the probable terms of employment needed to be prepared specially needed in a manner advantageous to the candidates. Thirdly, it remained to be considered through what agency the concerned authorities should make it known that mistresses were required and how the particulars regarding applicants were to be ascertained.

Creating a pool of prospective candidates for teaching was a challenging task and the Education Department could not afford to make class distinctions under the given circumstances. Therefore, the FEC recommended that government grant liberal stipends to women of all classes for completing their education to the end of the middle vernacular stage on the condition that they would serve for two years as a teacher. The rate of stipends should be 8 rupees per month in class V, 9 rupees in class VI and 10 rupees in class VII of the Middle Vernacular course. However, though the stipends were attractive, the Committee feared that unless the middle vernacular schools were entirely staffed with female teachers, guardians would not allow grown up girls to attend those schools. But where were such teachers to be found? It was acknowledged that special training schools afforded the best agency for the recruitment of teachers. Before the teachers' training school was established in Comilla on the recommendation of the FEC, the training classes attached to the Eden School was the only training facility for teachers in the whole of Eastern Bengal. That institution had trained 25 pupils by 1911.[64] Of them, nine were Brahmo, six were Hindu, seven were Christian, two were Muslim and one was a Parsi. Seven of the trainees were widows, four were married and the rest were young girls. At the end of their training, all of them were employed in government and mission schools in Dhaka, Barisal, Faridpur, Mymensingh and Comilla. After the annulment of partition, a new Female Education Committee was formed and the Committee took stock

[63] In the Education Policy of 1904, the primary stage was divided into two sections: the Upper Primary Section, which constituted classes III and IV, and the Lower Primary Section, which constituted classes I and II. See, The Indian Education Policy, Bengal Education Proceedings (A) for the month of June 1904, File 10-0/16, Nos. 50-51, NA,B.

[64] 'A Note on the Training Class Attached to the Eden High School For Girls, Dacca', GEBA, Education A Proceedings, File No. E/25-E, January 1912, Nos. 53-56, NA,B.

of the situation regarding the number of female teachers in proportion to the students. The tables that were prepared for Eastern Bengal provide a grim picture of the teacher-student ration in this region in the first decade and a half of the twentieth century. The first table shows the number of students in various educational institutions. The second table shows the number of women teachers employed in various institutions. Table 3.3 is a list of women teachers, trained and untrained.

Table 3.1: Number of Students in Various Institutions for Girls.

Types of Institutions	**No. of Institutions**	**No. of Pupils**
Colleges	00	00
High Schools	04	684
Middle English Schools	05	573
Middle Vernacular Schools	09	745
Primary Schools	4,951	105,573
Training Institutions	02	43

Source: Government of Bengal Education Branch A proceedings, March 1915, File 4-0/49/1-2, Nos. 77-81, National Archives of Bangladesh, List 18, Bundle 42.

Table 3.2: Statement of the Number of Female Teachers Employed.

Divisions	**Primary**	**Middle**	**High**
Dacca	197	03	09
Rajshahi	130	20	07
Chittagong	188	11	06
Total	**515**	**34**	**22**

Total number of woman teachers: 571

Source: Government of Bengal Education Branch A proceedings, March 1915, File 4-0/49/1-2, Nos. 77-81, National Archives of Bangladesh, List 18, Bundle 42.

Table 3.3: Statement of Female Teachers, Trained and Untrained.

	Primary Schools		Middle Schools		High Schools	
Divisions	Trained	Untrained	Trained	Untrained	Trained	Untrained
Dacca	15	182	02	01	03	06
Rajshahi	13	117	00	20	00	07
Chittagong	04	184	05	06	02	04
Total	**32**	**483**	**07**	**09**	**05**	**17**

Total number of trained teachers: 44

Total number of untrained teachers: 509

Source: Government of Bengal Education Branch A proceedings, March 1915, File 4-0/49/1-2, Nos. 77-81, National Archives of Bangladesh, List 18, Bundle 42.

The tables show the glaring disparity between the demand and the supply of teachers. If female education was to progress, priority was needed to be given to the production of a corresponding number of teachers. The projected increase of the number of schools in the following ten years required an estimated number of 7,000 primary school teachers and 300 secondary school teachers.

In the meantime, the quest for female teachers remained tenacious as a lack of Muslim trainees was a perennial matter of concern for the authorities. The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur Syed Nawab Ali, zaminder of Dhanbari, Tangail, who would later be instrumental in the establishment of the University of Dhaka, mentions: "As a matter of principle, teachers should be always women. It would certainly be extremely difficult to attract Muslim girls to schools which will not only have, out and out, an entire staff of lady teachers, but which would not maintain, due regard to *Purdah*."[65] The minimum qualification for applying for a teaching job was a primary school certificate. Even that, however, was not forthcoming in the foreseeable future.

Other Schemes for Progress

At the initiative of Khan Bahadur Syed Nawab Ali Chaudhuri, zamindar of Dhanbari, Tangail, special preferences were proposed specifically for the encouragement of education among Muslim girls. The Muslim members of the sub-committee headed by him recommended setting up schools for Muslim girls at district or sub-divisional headquarters, and the setting up of Board schools for Muslim girls. The sub-committee also recommended the revision of text-books in order to omit any portion that was offensive to the religious sentiment of the Muslims. They also recommended separate Readers for Muslim zenana classes. It also suggested that pending a separate training school for Muslim teachers, the training class that was attached to Eden Girls' High School should teach Urdu as an extra subject. A proportion of the scholarships were also to be reserved for Muslim girls. A request was placed with the Director of Public

[65] 'Answers to Questions Relating to Female Education', p. 144.

Instruction to send an Inspectress to Hyderabad to visit the zenana schools there and examine the methods and system of female education in the estate including the teaching of Urdu. Among other recommendations were granting of scholarships to zenana students on a half-yearly basis, instead of the current yearly one, the establishment of a central female madrassa in Dacca with a training class attached to it to train Muslim mistresses. It was to have a middle vernacular curriculum and run by four or five mistresses under a well-trained Superintendent who would be paid a salary of Rs. 250 a month. The medium of instruction here would be either Bengali or Urdu. The Female Education Committee included all the issues raised by the sub-committee in the Committee's final recommendations.

The Committee proposed to provide scholarships to give financial incentive to deserving students, with immediate effect. There would be 100 Primary scholarships of Rs. 4 each; twenty Middle Vernacular scholarships of Rs. 5 each; 40 Middle English scholarships of Rs. 6 each. In anticipation that women would one day move towards tertiary education, the Committee suggested 6 junior scholarships of the value of Rs. 20 and six senior scholarships of the value of Rs. 25. The junior and senior scholarships may be held in any college recognized by a University, or any other institution with the sanction of its Director. The Eden High School became the first institution for girls' tertiary education when a college was attached to it in 1921. When the Director of Public Instruction objected to the great expense of carrying out such lofty plans, the Committee resolved to limit the recommendation of scholarships to 100 Primary scholarships at Rs. 3 each, 12 Middle Vernacular scholarships at Rs. 4 each and 8 Middle English scholarships at Rs. 5 each.[66]

Improvement on the existing system of inspection and the widening of the control of the Education Department on all educational institutions got high priority in the recommendations of the FEC. Recommendations were also made to lessen the number of offices through which the bills for the payments of mistresses' salaries were processed so

[66] 'Recommendations of the Female Education Committee', June 1911, GEBA, Education (A) Proceedings, January 1912, File No. E/25-E, Nos. 53-56, NAB.

that delays in disbursement would not occur. Thirty new urban schools were to be established in three years at a cost of Rs. 36,400 (whereas only Rs. 7000 was provided in the budget for capital expenditure).[67]

An Appraisal of the Female Education Committee

A general review of girls' education in Bengal made in 1905 had revealed that, "...everything points to the fact that we are on the eve of a large expansion of education for women and girls. The people are willing to welcome such an expansion provided that progress proceeds on lines that are not antagonistic to their conservative instincts, with which sympathy should be shown. The policy must not be destructively radical, but progressively conservative."[68] The composition of the Female Education Committee and the people selected for the survey conducted with the questionnaire ensured that recommendations coming out from that Committee would be "progressively conservative", yet not "destructively radical." The lasting contribution of the FEC stems from the exhaustive reports of the myriad of sub-committees appointed to enquire into every aspect of female education in Eastern Bengal. This detailed corpus of documents provides invaluable information that no report of the Director of Public Instructions for undivided Bengal had provided before. The problem of the training of teachers, the necessity for increasing the salaries of female teachers, the importance of bringing the accommodation facilities of teachers into consideration, etc. were aspects that hitherto had failed to attract the necessary attention.

However, an inherent weakness of the Female Education Committee was that, it was entrusted with the task of making recommendations only, with no power or mechanism for implementing them. The funds that would be needed sounded so staggering that the Chief Secretary wrote to the Lieutenant-Governor: "These estimates of the total cost of the recommendations of the Female Education Committee are interesting mathematical exercises. But they need not disturb us, I think, as they represent

[67] Ibid., p. 1.
[68] Report on Public Instruction in Bengal for the year 1905-06, Nos. 138-139, File 8-R-1/5, Calcutta, dated 5th November, 1906, p. 6.

merely an ideal to which we may aspire, but which we cannot hope to reach, and it is probable that the scheme now set out, will be modified in many respects, long before we come within reasonable distance of its realization."[69]

Although the idea of a representative body to guide government policy was an altruistic one, the rhetorical aspect of the whole operation of the Female Education Committee was overwhelming. Even before the Committee went into session, the government attitude towards the whole enterprise was that it would not be very hard to summon the Committee and arrive at a plausible scheme that would look all right on paper, but the results might be as futile as the many other similar endeavors made to promote female education in the country.[70] Sadly, the entire work of the representative body was overshadowed by the imperialist political rhetoric that gripped the scene as the first decade of the 20th century drew to a close. The decision to wrap up the partition was already made in administration circles by 1909. So implementations of ambitious plans of the government of Eastern Bengal during the partition interlude carried no meaning for the government. The members of the FEC, however, worked with conviction amidst this turmoil. The various sub-committees worked extremely hard, investigating every aspect of education and preparing extensive reports for the Committee. The Committee in turn made detailed suggestions for the consideration of the government. But much of the work was futile. The proposals were rendered valueless. Nevertheless, the detailed reports prepared by the sub-committees for the Female Education Committee has remained as invaluable documents for the condition of female education in Eastern Bengal. Whereas most education reports were Calcutta-centric, the period during partition produced significant data exclusively for the region of Eastern Bengal.

The Marxist historian's explanation for the failure of the Female Education Committee to oversee the implementation of the ambitious plans it had laid out for the government would be that such failures were a recurrent phenomenon of colonial rule

[69] 'Report on female education in the Province of Eastern Bengal and Assam', Education Department A Proceedings, Assam Secretariat (Sylhet Proceedings), File No. E-946 of 1909, April 1910, Nos. 1-8, NA,B.

[70] 'Constitution of a Committee to consider and advise Government upon the question of Female Education in Eastern Bengal and Assam', GEBA, Education (A) Proceedings, File No. E-349 of 1908, No. 125, NAB.

everywhere. In the Marxist context, the failure of the FEC was nothing but the essential inability of a nascent middle class to bring about social transformation within a hegemonic colonial structure.[71] Any such attempt would have to rely heavily upon the backing of the colonial ruler. In the case of the FEC, the whole cause turned into an intellectual exercise that fell victim to the complex interplay of colonial rhetoric and political expediency. The Female Education Committee ceased to exist when the partition of Bengal was annulled in 1911. Nevertheless, within that short period, the emphasis placed on the importance of teachers had much to do with transforming the old deep-seated disdain for woman's paid work into complacent acceptance. The partition interlude opened new avenues for members of the *ashraf* class like Syed Nawab Ali Chaudhuri to play an active role in the campaign for the extension of female education among the Muslims. The most positive legacy of the experiment of the Female Education Committee, however, would be the new efforts to consult widely on controversial aspects of educational policy and to encourage female participation on central and local committees and boards. The contributions of individual women on these committees later laid the foundation for the participation of the New Woman in the socio-political arena in a more worthwhile manner.

By the first quarter of the twentieth century changes were not discernible in the previous century began to manifest themselves in many forms. One of those was the prolonging of childhood for both male and female children. As the first generations of educated girls began to emerge as mothers, they made sure that their female offspring went to school and stayed there longer than the mother had had a chance. The transition from childhood to adolescence began to grow less traumatic as the instances of childhood marriages began to decrease in numbers. The following chapter explores this phenomenon and discusses the contents of female education.

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[71] See Chatterjee, Partha, *Empire and Nation: Essential Writings, 1985-2005* (New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2010), p. 96.

Chapter 4

The Structure and Content of the New Education

In the preceding chapters we have attempted to trace the steps that were being taken to bring the women of Bengal into the fold of the colonial modernity that had been breaking down old taboos and creating the environment for the emergence of the New Woman.[1] If education was the site where the not-so-opposing dichotomies of patriarchal domination and colonial subordination manifested themselves on the questions centering on the method, nature or objective of that education, it was also the catalyst that ushered into the life of a Bengali woman something she had not experienced before --- a childhood.

Since the publication of Philipe Aries' seminal work *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life*[2] in 1962, the historiography on the discourse of family and childhood has grown remarkably. Nevertheless, Aries' work remains the classic text where it was claimed for the first time that childhood was not a biological given but a socially constructed concept and that the modern system of education and an awareness of its importance had essentially created the experience of childhood. The school system, Aries argues, introduced a sharp divide between adult and child worlds. The development of the school curricula relied on age-based demarcations from the infant level to the upper levels, thus specifying the stages of a child's life. As the concept of schooling spread and was extended across gender and class lines, childhood itself lasted longer.

Critics of Aries question his method of inferential history and use of atypical examples like family portraits as evidence taken out of context. However, there was nothing inferential about the lack of childhood innocence in the girls of Bengal where, until the nineteenth and early

[1] The new women are those modern, educated gentle-women who emerged in colonial Bengal as products of the great social reform movements of the nineteenth century. For details, see Amin, Sonia Nishat, *The World of Muslim Women in Colonial Bengal, 1876-1939* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996). See also, Meredith Borthwick, *The Changing Role of Women in Bengal, 1894-1905* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984) and Ghulam Murshid, *The Reluctant Debutant: Response of Bengali Women to Modernization, 1849-1905* (Rajshahi: Sahitya Samsad, 1983).

[2] Originally published in French, in 1960 with the title *L' Enfant et la vie familial sous l' ancient régime*, it was translated into English by Robert Baldick and published by Random House Inc. in New York in 1962.

twentieth centuries, in general, girls were married off between ages seven and nine. Thus, the instant an infant daughter was weaned from the mother she became a miniature adult, learning domestic skills like cooking, washing, sewing and cleaning, waiting for her impending departure from the parental home to the marital one. A staggering number of these girls also settled into a widow's lifeless existence before they could reach puberty.[3]

An early initiation into the world of adult work, generally by the age of seven was also the norm for boys prior to the new education in Bengal introduced by the Despatch of 1854. Studies on the transformation from the indigenous method of pedagogy to the new education on the European model and a comparison of the curriculums show that the content of traditional education was geared towards the quick imparting of practical skills for joining the work force, whereas that of the European model was to transmit 'knowledge' aimed at moving on to higher education. The new curriculum and methodology thus prolonged school life which was favorable for the well-to-do but detrimental for the poor who needed their children to begin earning as quickly as possible.[4] The indigenous pathshala or madrassah allowed girls and boys to study together until the girl was removed and quarantined at home to wait and prepare for her wedding.

The introduction of the modern school system was a major deviation from the indigenous mode of education on three significant counts. First of all, student stratification system was introduced which grouped students in specific classes according to their age. Such stratification did not exist in a strict form in the indigenous system. In the indigenous *Pathsala*, *Tol*, *Maktab* and *Madrassa*, children of different ages sat together in the same room or open space with one pundit or maulvi and recited after the pundit whatever lesson he chose to give.[5] Secondly, a structured curriculum was introduced for each class or age group. In the indigenous system, there

[3] Just for the purpose of illustrating how upper class girls shared the same fate as the ordinary classes: Kamala Debi, daughter of Ashutosh Mukherjee, Chief Justice of Calcutta High Court and Vice-Chancellor of Calcutta University, was married at the age of eight in 1904 and was widowed the following year, when she was nine years old. Kamala Debi got remarried in 1908 at the age of 16 but the majority of the child widows bore the life of widowhood from their teenage years, like Girijasundari Debi, born in 1894, got widowed at the age of fifteen and never remarried. She was the aunt of Dr. Bharati Ray, historian and Pro-Vice-Chancellor of Calcutta University.

[4] For an extensive study of the indigenous form of education, see Kazi Shahidullah, *Patshalas Into Schools: The development of indigenous elementary education in Bengal, 1854-1905* (Calcutta: Firma KLM Private Limited, 1987) and Md. Abdullah Al Masum, *Banglar Muslim Samajey Adhunik Sikshar Agragoti* (The Spread of Modern Education in the Bengali Muslim Society: 1885-1921), Dhaka: Bangla Academy, 2007, Sheela Bose, 'Indigenous Education in Bengal: 1835 to 1882 (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Jadavpur University, Calcutta).

[5] See Kazi Shahidullah, *Patshalas Into Schools* (Calcutta: 1987).

was no structured curriculum for separate levels of education. The discretion of the pundit/maulvi was exercised on how much to teach an individual child. Thirdly, primers were prepared to meet the specific requirements of the curriculum. In the indigenous system there was no fixed curriculum and no prescribed text books. The Scottish missionary William Adam reports that, "Normally no printed books were used in the *patshalas* and even manuscript text books were unknown to most of these (indigenous) institutes."[6] The pundit or maulvi gave lessons according to his own discretion. The process of secularizing education through a secular curriculum had the most enduring impact in the process of modernization during colonial rule and after.

The missionaries contributed to the modernization of the system of education in Bengal by introducing, for the first time, the concept of a fixed curriculum and prescribed text books. Before that, indigenous education followed a more practical line where children were taught "what was then considered to be essential in meeting the practical demands of life."[7] The *patshala* (also spelled *pathsala*) was the indigenous school for elementary education. They were set up through the benevolence of the local zamindars and were staffed chiefly by Hindu teachers. *Patshalas* were attended mostly by Hindu students, but Muslim children were not barred from entrance. There was no restriction for girls to attend either. The *maktabs* and *madrassahs* were exclusively for Muslim students. Whereas the *maktabs* offered Koranic education through rote learning only, the *madrassahs* were devoted to the study of Arabic, Persian and the vernacular. These indigenous institutions did not follow any fixed curriculum and, consequently, did not have a set of designated primers to follow. Young scholars passing out from these traditional institutions were not awarded any degrees or certificates. Colonial modernity was stamped on young minds through the introduction of an organized and structured pedagogical system that was layered with different levels and rewarded with degrees on completion of the designated program.

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[6] W. Adam, *Reports on the State of Education in Bengal (1835 and 1838)*, ed., Anathanath Basu, University of Calcutta, Calcutta, 1941, cited in Kazi Shahidullah, *op.cit.*, p. 14.

[7] Kazi Shahidullah, *Patshalas Into Schools: The development of indigenous elementary education in Bengal, 1854-1905* (Calcutta: Firma KLM Private Limited, 1987).

W. Adam's third report of 1838 and all subsequent education reports show that village girls of very young age attended the *maktab*s and *madrassah*s along with the boys until they got married starting from the age of nine or even earlier. *Tol*s were the higher institutions of classical learning and, as such, were out of bounds for girls. The little scholars usually entered the pathshala at around the age of five and generally spent six years to nine years in different stages of learning, depending on the individual student's ability and requirement. In his study of the development of indigenous elementary education in Bengal, Kazi Shahidullah presents detailed accounts of the *pathshala* course and method of study. There were four distinct stages. Girls were removed from the *pathshala*s somewhere between the first and second stages. As described by Shahidullah, in the first stage, scholars spent about eight to ten days tracing vowels and consonants of the Bengali alphabet on the ground with a stick.[8] In the second stage, which lasted between two and a half to four years, scholars graduated to writing on palm leaves and learned to join vowels to consonants, formed compound letters, learned the tables of numeration and got acquainted with the units of weight and measures. The third stage comprised of two to three years of study. Girls usually did not reach this stage. Scholars were promoted to writing on plantain leaves and arithmetic, simple cases of mensuration of land and commercial and agricultural accounts were taught. In the final stage scholars were elevated to the status of writing on paper and were further instructed in agricultural and commercial accounts, composition of different types of business letters, petitions, grants, leases, acceptances, and a little bit of Sanskrit grammar.[9] The contents of pathshala education show how extremely practical and job-oriented indigenous education was. The *maktab* and the *madrassah* however, had a less secular curriculum.

Although it was not possible for girls of ordinary families to receive the type of education imparted in the *pathshala*, women of the land-owning class were educated and trained in the legal and financial aspects of running a *zamindari* so that she could take over the task in case she was widowed or did not have a male heir. There are several instances of Bengali women looking after every detail of their respective *zamindari*s from behind the purdah. Of the noted female *zamindar*s of Eastern Bengal, mention has been made of Nawab Faizunnesa Choudhurani (1834-

[8] Ibid., pp. 16-17.
[9] Adam, pp. 143-145, cited in K. Shahidullah, p. 17.

1903) of Comilla who would have been remembered for the publication of her allegorical autobiography *Rupjalal* (published in 1876) but also performed an immense amount of charitable work, earning her the title of 'Nawab' from Queen Victoria in 1889. The district of Rajshahi had a number of female *zamindar*s who operated their estates from behind the purdah with the help of their male staff. Rani Bhavani (1716-1795) of Rajshahi was among the most influential of the Eastern Bengal *zamindar*s as it was the second largest *zamindari* of the Rajshahi Division.[10] The Dinajpur estate was managed in the 18th century by a string of female *zamindar*s Rani Saraswati, Rani Tripuri Sundari and Rani Shyam Mohini.[11] Rani Bishwamoi of Nadia and Begum Monnujan of Khulna were well-known for their charity and management skills. The land on which the Khulna Government Girls' School stands today was donated by Begum Monnujan. Janhabi Chaudhurani was a famous land-owner of Mymensingh who was notable not only for her charitable work but also for her power, strength and tyranny.[12]

When the Department of Education was established in 1855, it made formal divisions of the stages of instruction for girls, as for boys, according to the age range of the scholar.[13] The stages of instruction, according to the descending order, were divided into (1) Intermediate College Stage, (2) High Stage, (3) Middle Stage, and, (4) Primary Stage.[14] The curriculum had to be developed for each of these stages. The primers had to be freshly prepared also because the traditional institutions did not have text books that the educational officials found worth following. Of the four different stages of education, the Intermediate College stage constituted a two-year program. The high stage consisted of classes VII, VIII, IX and X. The middle stage consisted of classes V and VI. The primary stage was divided into two sections: the Upper Primary Section, which constituted classes III and IV, and the Lower Primary Section, which constituted classes I and II. There was also a Preparatory Section for infants.

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[10] See entry on Rani Bhabani by ABM Mahmood in *Banglapedia: National Encyclopedia of Bangladesh* (Dhaka: Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, 2006).
[11] See *Banglapedia*
[12] Borthwick, *The Changing Role of Women in Bengal*, p. 21.
[13] "Improvement of the arrangement of the annual report on "Education in India" published by the Educational Commissioner with the Government of India on the basis of the plan of "Annual Survey of Education in Canada, 1929", Education Department, File No. 31-5/32-E, 1932, National Archives of India, New Delhi.
[14] *Ibid.*, p. 72.

The Department of Education, in addition to demarcating the stages of instruction, recognized two main streams of education: English medium education and education through the vernacular. Thus, there were English High Schools and English Middle Schools and there were Vernacular High Schools and Vernacular Middle Schools. More often then not, Primary sections would be attached to the English High and Middle schools. As for the primary education of the general population *en masse*, the Department of Education recognized those indigenous *maktab*s and *pathshala*s that taught the secular curriculum prescribed by the Department. The Department also gave its nod of approval to girls' Madrassas and Koran schools where only reciting the Koran was taught. At the end of the year 1906-07, the Inspectress of Schools Miss Garret reported that there were 40 or 50 such Koran schools in Dacca. [15]

These diverse streams of education were quite divisive for society in the long run and resulted in furthering class distinctions rather than creating a homogeneous society through a uniform system of education, under the guidance of a secular curriculum.

The Hunter Commission on Curriculum:

From the second half of the nineteenth century onwards, the Government began to gradually take control of the field of education by formulating policies and regulating and supervising different educational activities. To be more precise, it was in 1854 that the Court of Directors of the East India Company definitely accepted the systematic promotion of general education as one of the duties of the State.'[16] This meant the establishment of government control over what was to be taught to whom. Regarding curricular development for girls' schools, the Indian Education Commission of 1882 had to consider what girls should or should not be taught. Should they be given the same education as the boys? What would they do with the same education as boys? Did their vocation in life call for the same curriculum that boys had? Didn't a girl's future role as wife, mother and house keeper disqualify her for an education curriculum that was designed to prepare boys for the job market? What good would a general education do except making her

[15] Extract from the Proceedings of the Lieutenant-Governor of Eastern Bengal and Assam in the Education Department, Assam Secretariat (Sylhet Proceedings) Education A Proceedings, File No. E-946 of 1909, Nos. 1-8, NLA,B.
[16] The Indian Education Policy, Bengal Education Proceedings (A) for the month of June 1904, File 10-0/16, Nos. 50-51, National Archives, Bangladesh.

unsuitable as a house keeper? Were Hindus and Muslims to follow the same curriculum? The Commission recommended that 'the standards of instruction for primary girls' schools be simpler than those for boys' schools, and be drawn up with special reference to the requirements of home life, and to the occupations of women.'[17] The Education Commission clearly articulated the primary assumption of the age that female education was intended as a latent function as opposed to the manifest function of boys' education. The functionalist perspective was directly related to the education system as it most necessarily determined the type of curriculum to be followed.[18] The reference to the special requirements of home life and selective occupations suitable for women prompted the Education Commission to recommend that 'the greatest care be exercised in the selection of suitable text-books for girls' schools, and that the preparation for such books be encouraged.[19] If the standard of instruction for girls were really to be lowered in primary school, then, for all logical and practical purposes, standards had to be lowered in the higher level also. This fact did not evade the Commission. It recommended that 'an alternative subject in examinations suitable for girls be established, corresponding in standard to the Matriculation examination, but having no relation to any existing University course.' Thus, as far as governmental guidance was concerned, the stage was set for attempting to steer the course of curricular development for female education on a different direction than boys' education. Thirty years down the road, a Partition (1905) and an Annulment (1912) later, the Governor-General in Council was still echoing almost the same words as the Education Commission recommendations: 'the education of girls should be practical with reference to the position they will fill in social life'; 'it should not seek to imitate the education suitable for boys nor should it be dominated by examinations'; 'special attention should be payed to hygiene and the surroundings of school life'.[20]

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[17] Report of the Indian Education Commission Appointed by the Resolution of the Government of India dated 3rd February 1882, Calcutta: Printed by the Superintendent of Government Printing, India, 1883, Chapter X. (Henceforth referred to as Education Commission Report).

[18] Sociologist Robert Merton explains that the manifest function of education is to provide people with information, skills and values, whereas the latent function of education keeps young people out of the job market, provides a 'baby-sitter', and perpetuates differences between highly qualified and less qualified people. See Merton, Robert K., *Social Theory and Social Structure* (New York: Free Press, 1968), cited in Gelles, Richard J. and Levine, Ann (eds.), *Sociology: An Introduction* (New York: McGraw-Hill Inc., 5th edition, 1995), p. 65.

[19] *Ibid.*

[20] Resolution by the Government of India, 8th March, 1913, No. 1237 E. Proceedings of the Department of Education (A), Assam Secretariat (Sylhet Proceedings), File No. E-261-E of 1913, NAL,B.

Debate on the Content of Education for Girls:

Long after the issue of whether women needed institutional education at all was settled in its favor in the nineteenth century, the content of that education remained a polemical issue till the early twentieth century. Sonia Nishat Amin categorizes the ideological debate that was fought out in the leading contemporary newspapers, periodicals and journals as conservative, centrist and liberal.[21] The monthly periodical *Al-Eslam* which had begun publication from Calcutta in 1915, was the mouthpiece of the conservative viewpoint of the Muslims, the majority population of Eastern Bengal. In its fifth year of publication, a small piece titled 'Shikshar Vitti (The Basis of Education) was published in which the author Sheikh Abdur Rahman says that it would never do for Muslim girls to get an education of the western model. He also thought that Muslim girls should not leave the house in a carriage, wearing chemise, kameez and study in schools till "old" age.[22] Western education, according to the author resulted only in the reading of cheap novels, writing love letters, developing an unhealthy obsession for adorning themselves in peculiar clothing, things that were not desirable in girls. The author was thoughtful enough to suggest a primary education curriculum for the Muslim girls of Bengal which was as follows:[23]

Class I --- The Quran, Bangla, arithmetic, oral test on subject lessons, hygiene, character formation, handwriting.

Class II --- The Quran, Urdu, Bangla, arithmetic, oral test on object lessons, hygiene, character formation, handwriting.

Class III --- The Quran, Urdu, Bangla, select topics on history and geography, arithmetic, oral test on object lessons, hygiene, character formation, handwriting.

Class IV --- Urdu, Bangla, select topics on history and geography, arithmetic, oral test on object lessons, hygiene, character formation, handwriting, drawing, needlework.

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[21] Amin, pp. 185-210.

[22] Sheikh Abdur Rahman, 'Shikshar Vitti (The Basis of Education), *Al-Eslam,* 5th year, 8th number, Agrahayon, 1919, cited in Mustafa Nurul Islam, *Samayikpatre Jiban O Janamat, 1901-1930* (Life and Public Opinion in Periodicals), (Dhaka: Bangla Academy, 1977), p. 22.

[23] Mustafa Nurul Islam, p.22.

Class V --- Urdu, masala masaylere book, Bangla, history and geography, arithmetic, object lessons, lessons on hygiene and character building, art work, needle work, cooking, child care, family care, home management, handwriting.
Class VI --- Same as Class V.

The need for establishing a separate identity for Muslims was felt acutely by conservatives who lamented the loss of power to the Christian aliens and resented the advancement of the Hindu population that had taken advantage of the new education and held exalted positions in the colonial bureaucracy by the early twentieth century. The view Abdur Rahman articulated represented the general conservative view.

The centrist point of view had a certain ambivalence, as Amin points out in that the centrists more often than not vacillated from conservative to liberal and back. They insisted that Nature had made males and females biologically and temperamentally different and had ordained for males and females different functions in the greater scheme of the universe. The educational content of males and females should be organized around the functions they were supposed to play in life – service outside the home for the male, home-making for the female. One representative document would be Ismail Hossain Shiraji's *Stree Shiksha* (Women's Education) published in 1907 from Calcutta. Writer, orator and peasant leader, Shiraji himself did not have a college education, but was a self-taught enlightened man.[24] In his writings, Shiraji advocated the necessity to harmonize religious tradition with secular thought so that a balance could be struck where the physical and mental growth of women could be assured. Although he stressed moral education for the ladies in the *andarmahal*, he also supported the imparting of scientific knowledge to women and advocated for their participation in public life provided purdah was observed.[25]

The liberal section of Bengali society, almost all of them English-educated men who led the social reform movement in the nineteenth century and oversaw the ideological construction of the New Woman, also contributed to the creation of the experience of childhood for women.

[24] See the entry on Shiraji by Rana Razzak in *Banglapedia* (Dhaka: 2006).
[25] Amin, *The World of Muslim Women,* p. 196.

This was done by lending full support to the movement for women's education and the delaying of the age of marriage. The liberals had to be careful not to hurt the sentiment of the conservative Muslim population of Eastern Bengal, thus resorting to the rationalization of religion and seeking sanction from religious scriptures for advocacy of equal education for boys and girls. Among the advocates in the efforts of rationalizing Islam with modernist interpretations, Amin mentions Syed Ameer Ali, a lawyer by profession, founder of the National Mohammedan Association in Calcutta in 1877 and the London Branch of the Muslim League in 1909. Syed Ameer Ali was known to have been particularly interested in women's property legislation, women's suffrage and women's right to education.[26] However, when he was called upon by the Hunter Commission to give his views on education in India, he failed to raise the question of female education and did not comment on a single one of the six questions that were related to girls' education.[27] In his deliberations in the Central National Mohammedan Association (CNMA) Syed Ameer Ali advocated an education for women that would be satisfactory to both 'conservatives and progressionists.'[28]

By far the most vocal propagandist for female agency was undoubtedly Rokeya Sakhawat Hossein (1880-1932) who is considered the first feminist of Bengal. Not resorting to just rhetoric, Mrs. R.S. Hossein went into action to implement her views on women's right, never, however, relinquishing purdah. She was the epitome of the picture the liberals were trying to imprint on society what an educated would be like: not one who would be idle and indolent and promiscuous, but one who would know how to make the home an abode of happiness, a house-keeper who would know how to keep accounts and spend wisely, a mother who would be able to raise healthy children in a hygienic environment. Although Mrs. Hossein's conjugal life was cut short by the death of her husband and she was childless, she was the surrogate mother to the girls who she brought to her school, begging the parents to let her have them.

Government finally stepped in to take a more active role in settling the content of female education through the questionnaire circulated in 1907 discussed in Chapter 3. Two of the

[26] For an extensive analysis of Syed Ameer Ali's work, see Avril Powell, 'Islamic Modernism and Women's Status: The Influence of Syed Ameer Ali' in Powell and Lambert-Hurley (eds.), *Rhetoric and Reality* (New Delhi: OUP, 2006), pp. 282-309.
[27] Ibid., p. 299.
[28] Ibid.

questions in the questionnaire dealt with the curriculum. The syllabus formulated for girls' schools in the Education Policy of 1904 was mostly approved by that opinion poll. But is still interesting to see what the respondents of the questionnaire were thinking on the question of female education curricula.

Settling the Question of Content through Public Opinion:

Question number 8 and 10 were concerned with curriculum. Question 8 was: "Will the following subjects of instruction be suitable for schools? --- Reading, writing, arithmetic, household accounts, hygiene, and domestic economy, geography, history and needlework?"[29] Question 10 was: "Whether it is desirable to impart general religious instruction in these schools, and if so, what should be the lines on which it should be given and under what conditions of superintendence and control?"[30]

In question number eight, the nature of the question left little or no scope for original thoughts to be voiced. The question was formulated on the basis of the subjects already being taught in the schools and the curriculum finalized by the Education Department in 1904 which was being followed in West Bengal.[31] Question number ten may appear to take the question of Hindu-Muslim communal sensitivity into consideration, but at the same time, it may also have been aimed at addressing the dichotomous relationship between Christian missionary activity and the spread of female education in Bengal. While on the one hand Christian missionary societies provided education to the largest number of females in the schools and in the zenanas combined, their proselytization attempts were not welcome to the members of genteel society.

A perusal of all the answers to question eight reveal that the majority agree that the subjects mentioned in the question are suitable for girls' schools. The six missionaries who were among the respondents accepted all the subjects mentioned in the question as suitable for girls and did not suggest any change. But there were others whose disagreements and suggestions

[29] Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings (A), File No. E-349 for April 1908, Nos. 125-143, National Archives and Library of Bangladesh.
[30] *Ibid.*
[31] See Resolution No. 1028 T.G., dated the 10th June, 1907, by the Government of Bengal, 4th edition (Calcutta: The Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, 1908), The National Archives of India, New Delhi.

about the girls' curriculum make for very interesting study on the social attitudes towards female education. Except the group of missionaries, almost all the other groups that consisted of civil servants and Education Department officers and social leaders from the Hindu and Muslim communities recorded that knowledge of History and Geography was hardly necessary for girls. A Sub-Deputy Collector of Mainagury, Babu Balaram Das commented: "A good knowledge of History and Geography appears scarcely necessary for girls. Selected portions from the religious and moral texts etc., may be read by Hindu girls and extracts from Koran Shariff by Muslim girls."[32] Inspectors, Assistant Inspectors and Deputy Inspectors of Schools from Rajshahi, Chittagong, Brahmanbaria and Dacca and some Hindu and Muslim gentlemen echoed the same disdain for teaching History and Geography to girls. "I would rather omit Geography and History and in their place recommend such practical and industrial education as spinning, weaving, knitting and even where practicable, cooking", says Maulvi Nuruddin Ahmed, Member of Local Board, Nowgong.[33] Nursing and midwifery were also suggested as subjects that should replace history and geography. The choice of such subjects was aptly justified by F.C. French, Esq., I.C.S., Deputy Commissioner of Cachar, as he feels that the standard of instruction should be drawn up with special reference to the requirements of home-life and to the occupations open to women.[34] Another British officer, Major H.M. Halliday, Deputy Commissioner of Darrang opined that the study of History and Geography in Lower Primary Schools may be discarded from the curriculum, cookery being introduced in their stead. Halliday also thought that the study of biographies of great men and women would be of great importance to form the character of girls.[35] Character formation and high morals was an important part of teaching in the girls' schools in England in the nineteenth century and drawing, music, dancing, needlework etc. were included in the curriculum as 'basic subjects'.[36]

Music, drawing and painting were subjects that most private Hindu gentlemen wanted added to the curriculum. Because of the prominent place music, drawing and painting holds in the Hindu religion and Hindu cultural tradition, it is not surprising that out of twenty-nine Hindu

[32]Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings (A), File No. E-349 for April 1908, Nos. 125-143, p. 91, National Archives and Library of Bangladesh.
[33] *Ibid.*, p. 98.
[34] Ibid., p. 89.
[35] Ibid., p. 89.
[36] See Michael Sanderson, *Education, economic change and society in England: 1780-1870*, prepared for the Economic History Society (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, second edition, 1995), p. 56.

respondents, twenty-six should suggest the inclusion in the curriculum of those subjects. Nor is it not surprising that not a single Muslim respondent proposed them. A Christian missionary, Reverend J.P. Jones, mentions, "I would suggest singing in addition to the list mentioned. I find that all the girls are extremely fond of singing, and have a talent for music."[37] Maulvi Yaquinuddin Ahmed, Government Pleader, Dinajpur is the lone Muslim respondent who mentions the need to teach drawing. The cultural factor set aside, suggestions for additional subjects to be considered for the curriculum illustrates how deeply the idea of domesticity pervaded the minds of the patriarchs.

The answers reflected the ideas of a time and age when serious doubts were cast on the capacity of women to exercise their minds in the pursuit of an intellectual kind. The Magistrate of Rangpur, Mr. J. Vas, Esq., I.C.S. took the opportunity of the survey of 1907 to suggest taking a pragmatic attitude towards female education in Eastern Bengal. He says, "The course of instruction for girls should not be the same as that for the boys. They have not many years to devote to study, and it is not necessary in their case to make the instruction imparted in the first few years merely the foundation for higher study. As much knowledge should be imparted in these years as possible and it should be extensive rather than intensive."[38]

Question number ten, which asked whether it was desirable to impart general religious instruction in the schools seems on the one hand to recognize the deep seated communal divide in Bengal in general, while on the other hand, it addresses the great contribution of the Christian missions to the building of girls' schools throughout the Province and their desire to impart lessons from the Bible in some form or other. However, it can be noted here that, on the question of religious instructions, the Despatch of 1854 is quite clear as it says about the students in paragraph 32 that "...there will be an ample field for their labours unconnected with any instruction in the tenets of the Hindu or Muhammadan religions. We should refuse to sanction any such teaching as directly opposed to the principle of religious neutrality to which we have always adhered."[39] Although this assertion was made in relation to the Universities, the

[37] Ibid., p. 95.
[38] *Ibid.*, p. 98.
[39] Bengal Education Proceedings (A) for the month of December, 1914, File 3-S/80/1-7, Nos. 12-18, National Archives, Bangladesh.

generality of the rule encompasses education as a whole. The Government of India, Resolution No. 199-211 of 11th March, 1904 had pronounced firmly that in Government institutions the curriculum is, and must continue to be, strictly secular. However, institutions enjoying Government grants-in-aid had no such restriction on religious teachings.

The six missionaries responded negatively to introducing general religious studies in school curricula on the ground that Government position of neutrality precludes religious instruction in state schools. However, the missionaries unanimously opined that in aided schools Government intervention regarding religious instruction is most unwelcome. Thus, the missionaries, in no uncertain terms, sought to protect their right to spread Christianity through the numerous schools they built. The Commissioner of the Rajshahi Division, F.C. Henniker, Esq., voiced the opinion of the majority when he insisted on imparting some form of religious instruction in schools whether for boys or girls. In his opinion, no education can be complete without knowledge of a subject of such importance.[40] But the practical difficulties of making arrangements for imparting religious instruction in public schools was acutely felt, hence most respondents felt that broad principles of morality and religion would suffice in the school curriculum. Some Muhammedan gentlemen held the view that a large number of Muslim girls will be attracted if arrangements can be made for the teaching of Muhammedan religion. They advocated separate schools for Muslim girls.[41] Similarly, some Hindu gentlemen preferred schools of the type of the Mohakali Patshala of Calcutta where instruction in Hindu religion was imparted along with secular education.[42]

The Committee on Female Education convened under the Resolution of the Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, No. 360E, dated the 17th February, 1908, met for the first time on February 26, 1908 and subsequently met once a year every year till the annulment of the Partition of Bengal in 1912. The sub-committees met more frequently, and prepared recommendations for the final approval of the Female Education Committee (FEC). In the meantime, when the Committee met in 1909, four new members, ladies who were extremely

[40] Proceedings of the meetings of the Female Education Committee, Education (A) Proceedings, Eastern Bengal and Assam Secretariat (Sylhet Proceedings), April 1908, No. 125, p. 3.
[41] *Ibid.*, p. 3.
[42] *Ibid.*, p.3.

active in matters pertaining to female education were added to the Committee. They were Miss M.E.A. Garrett, Inspectress of Schools, Mrs. P.K. Roy (Mrs. P.K. Roy was the former Sarala Das and daughter of the famous Sadharan Brahmo Leader Durga Mohan Das. Her sister Abala Das was married to the famous scientist Jagadish Chandra Bose.), Mrs. J.N. Roy and Miss L. Sorabji, Lady Superintendent, Eden School, Dacca. The sub-committees and the FEC took into consideration the opinions from the survey of 1907 regarding what to teach or not to teach the girls. The curriculum that was finally approved by the Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam in October, 1911 was to go into effect from 1912.[43]

The Victorian principle of high morality and the domestic ideology of the 'perfect wife' and 'wise mother' influenced the Hunter Commission and is manifest in the guiding principles for designing the curriculum for girls. It must not be overlooked, however, that in the colonial context, the need to shape the mind to create loyal subjects was also an important philosophy behind formulating a guideline for education. In the *Rules and Orders of the Education Department of Bengal* formulated by the Education Department of the Government of Bengal, it was stated clearly that building of character and preparing for the work of life was the chief purpose of an education.[44] Moral training, according to the *Rules and Orders*, was something that could not be left to chance, but carefully inculcated. The curriculum must be designed so that each pupil internalizes the qualities of obedience, loyalty, courage, strenuous effort and serviceableness.[45] All of these were considered the qualities of good citizenship. The development of qualities of individuality and independence of thought, which was synonymous to modernity in the Western cultural context was notably absent in the designing of curriculum for the colonial population.

Great stress was laid in the *Rules and Orders* formulated in 1904 on the right conduct of teachers for giving moral training to students. Patience, kindness accompanied by firmness and fairness, thoroughness, industriousness etc. were traits that were required in a teacher who was to

[43] Progress of Education in Bengal, 1912-13 to 1916-17, Fifth Quinquennial Review, W.W. Hornell, C.I.E., Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, 1918.
[44] Resolution No. 1028 T.G., dated the 10th June, 1907, by the Government of Bengal, 4th edition (Calcutta: The Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, 1908), The National Archives of India, New Delhi, p. 385.
[45] *Ibid.*, p. 385.

give moral training.[46] The teacher would have to be punctual, possess good manners, be clean and neat, conduct duties cheerfully, be considerate and respectful towards others and be honorable and truthful.[47] Children observe the conduct of the teacher and imitate what they see and hear, thus, punctuality, order, neatness and gentleness cannot be taught through stories in readers designed to inculcate morals, but can be impressed upon the children through the personal examples set by the teachers.[48]

The Curriculum Prepared for the Province of Eastern Bengal and Assam:

The curriculum that was formulated for Eastern Bengal after the Partition of 1905 aimed to "give a truer education to children than more antiquated methods, based on principles which have now been discarded".[49] The curriculum was prepared Miss Garret, the Inspectress of Schools, and Mr. Henry Sharp, the Director of Public Instruction. The curriculum that was formulated for Eastern Bengal after the Partition of 1905 aimed to "give a truer education to children than more antiquated methods, based on principles which have now been discarded".[50] The curriculum was prepared Miss Garret, the Inspectress of Schools, and Mr. Henry Sharp, the Director of Public Instruction.

Curriculum for Vernacular Girls' Schools:

As regards the course of study, the Female Education Committee recommended that there should be only two departments in girls' Vernacular schools: (i) a primary course of four years, consisting of classes I to IV, and, (ii) a middle vernacular course of three years, consisting of classes V to VII.[51] Existing Upper Primary schools may teach the primary course and the course for the lowest middle vernacular class but they should be classed as primary schools. Two certificates only should be given, the one ending the primary and the other the middle vernacular course. A girl on completion of the primary course may continue her studies either in a middle

[46] *Ibid.*, p. 386.
[47] *Ibid.*, p. 386.
[48] *Ibid.*, p. 386.
[49] *Ibid.*, p. 61.
[50] *Ibid.*, p. 61.
[51] Enclosure No. 1, Recommendations of the Female Education Committee, Education Department (A) Proceedings, Assam Secretariat (Sylhet Proceedings), File No. E-946 of 1909, April 1910, Nos. 1-8, NLA,B.

vernacular or in an English school. This new division of classes was to be brought into effect from 1st January, 1910.[52]

Classes I and II of the primary course was classified as infant classes. In infant classes the number of hours' work allocated per day was three. Classes III and IV were classified as primary classes. The number of hours' work for those two classes was four. The curriculum in the infant classes included reading, writing, arithmetic, some needlework, drawing and painting, music and singing. Muslim girls were not required to draw the human figure if objection came. Similarly, singing was optional for Muslim girls. Elementary history, geography, domestic economy and hygiene and science were introduced in classes III and IV. English as a subject was introduced in the middle vernacular course with simple reading, writing and some conversation.

The following columns describe in detail the course of study for the primary classes:

Class	Reading	Writing	Arithmetic	Domestic Economy and Hygiene	Geography	History	Science	Needlework	Drawing and Music
Class I	Recognition of alphabet, simple reading and recitation of 20 lines of easy verse	Making of letters and numbers with seeds in sand, and drawn on slates	Counting & making numbers with seeds in sand and on slates up to 10. Addition and subtraction up to 10. Tables- 5x10.					Pricked cards	Drawings of figures and objects. Action songs and simple exercise.
Class II	Reading accurately at sight with explanation and meaning. Recitation of 40 lines of verse.	Copying of sentences from primer on slates	Counting up to 1,000. Thorough mental practice in addition and subtraction up to 50. Tables- 10x10.					Hemming, top-sewing, canvas work, knitting.	Drawings of figures and objects.

[52] *Ibid.*, p. 8.

Class	Reading	Writing	Arithmetic	Domestic Economy and Hygiene	Geography	History	Science	Needlework	Drawing and Music
Class III	Recitation of 40 lines of verse with explanation. Parts of Speech orally taught. Reading of very easy manuscript.	Copying of sentences from primer on paper.	Meaning of numbers above 1,000. Writing of the same. Addition and subtraction. Tables 16x10; 10x¼; ¾ and 1¼. Indian tables (*Kora, Ganda, Pan* and *Chauk*.	Lessons on the furniture of the home and the school, with special reference to cleanliness.	Plan of the classroom to be drawn to scale. Points of the compass. Introducing the globe.	Biographies or incidents from the primer. Simple descriptions of the manners and customs of different times and peoples.	Simple object lessons from prescribed Reader.	Running and felling, stitching.	Working with the brush. Simple exercises in music.
Class IV	Recitation of 60 lines of verse with explanation. Parts of speech, gender, number and case, orally taught. Reading of simple manuscript.	Simple letter-writing. Descriptions of simple events of daily life.	The four simple rules of arithmetic. Tables 16x16 and compound addition and subtraction. Tables 16x¼, ½, ¾, 1¼, 1½ and 2½. Indian tables (*Buri, Serkiya*, etc. Mental application of the above rules and practice in *Subhankari* formula.	Simple lessons on the school, the home and the human body with special reference to neatness, order, cleanliness and diet.	The village or town taught on a plan. Map of the Province, special emphasis being laid on Eastern Bengal or on Assam districts, depending on location of school. Parts of land and water. Causes of day and night. Map drawing of village or town and Province.	Stories from the Reader about manners and customs of different times and peoples.	Simple object lessons from Reader.	Marking, simple letters, sewing on buttons and tapes.	Working with the brush. Simple exercises in music.

Source: Enclosure No. 1, Education Department (A) Proceedings, Assam Secretariat (Sylhet Proceedings), File No. E-946 of 1909, April 1910, Nos. 1-8, National Archives, Bangladesh.

Course of study for the Middle Vernacular school, Classes V, VI and VII:

	Reading	Writing	Arithmetic	Domestic Economy and Hygiene	Geography	History	Science	Needlework	Drawing and Music	English
Class V	Recitation of 80 lines of some standard work of verse with explanation. Simple Grammar, formation of sentences. Manuscript reading, including reading of simple accounts.	Letter-writing, description of simple events of daily life and objects of interest, reproductions of subjects in the Reader.	The four simple rules and compound addition and subtraction. Tables and mental arithmetic as in class IV. Keeping of accounts.	Lessons in the Reader.	The map of the district. The map of India. The solar system. Map drawing of district and India.	About Bengal and Assam.	Simple lessons from the Reader.	Darning, cutting out small garments, marking.	Singing and instrumental music (optional).	Reading, writing and conversation
Class VI	Recitation of 80 lines of some standard verse with explanation. Accidence and parsing. More advanced manuscript reading, including accounts.	As in Class V.	The four compound rules. Problems. Bazar calculations and rapid making up of bills and keeping of accounts.	Lessons in the Reader.	India in greater detail. The World in outline, with brief description of each Continent. Map drawing of India and Continents.	India up to the British period.	Simple lessons in the Reader.	Button-holing, herring-boning, feather-stiching, making easy garments.	Singing and instrumental music and simple exercises.	Reading, writing and conversation
Class VII	Recitation of 100 lines of some standard work in verse, with explanation. Parsing and analysis. Advanced manuscript reading.	As in Class V, simple essays.	Problems, simple interest by Indian or English method. Thorough practice in bazaar calculations and rapid making up of bills. Keeping of accounts.	Lessons in the Reader.	The World and its races. The British possessions. Map drawing of the World.	India, the whole history.	Simple lessons in the Reader.	More elaborate garments.	Same as Class VI	Reading, writing, conversation and simple grammar.

Source: Enclosure No. 1, Education Department (A) Proceedings, Assam Secretariat (Sylhet Proceedings), File No. E-946 of 1909, April 1910, Nos. 1-8, National Archives, Bangladesh.

The number of working hours was five hours, slightly more than that of boys' Middle English School. The girls had the additional curricula of natural science, hygiene and sewing which the boys' curricula did not have, hence the additional hours. Additional mathematics was introduced in the seventh grade and was optional for those girls who were striving to go up for Matriculation. History and Geography was included in both Vernacular and English schools.

Before the scheme could be introduced, however, Miss Garret insisted on preparing a detailed manual for the use of teachers. The manual had to be prepared in a manner that would appeal to, and be readily understood by Indian children. Miss Garret took the responsibility of preparing the manual after consultation with members of the sub-committee formed for the purpose which consisted of members Babu Ananda Chandra Rai, the Rev. Mr. Gurudas Chakravarti, and Khan Bahadur Syed Nawab Ali Chaudhuri, to decide which stories and lessons which would be popular. Two persons from the Education Department, one Hindu and the Muslim, would be placed on duty under Miss Garrett for preparation of the manual. The manual would be ready for adoption by January 1, 1910. It had been the imperial practice since 1877 to place Education Department officers on special duty for the purpose of preparing text books and manuals.[53] Other than this practice, the Imperial Government had no suitable machinery at its disposal to prepare an 'imperial series' of text books.

The FEC was acutely aware of the religious sensitivity of Bengali society. Therefore, clay modeling and drawing was not required of Muslim girls. The Muslim members of the FEC also insisted on removing 'Mythology' from the proposed curriculum of Miss Garret. The rest of the members respected the sentiment of the Muslims, as, after all, Eastern Bengal was a Muslim majority area.

The curriculum for the Middle English schools in Eastern Bengal were the same as the Middle Vernacular schools after English had been included in the curriculum for the latter. While considering the method of teaching English, the Female Education Committee were generally in favor of the "direct method" which involved the teaching of English in that language only, that is, not explaining anything in the vernacular. English, it was agreed, would be taught

[53] Government of Bengal, Home Department Resolution No. 101, dated 23rd of April, 1877.

as a "foreign language" The missionary members of the Committee strongly recommended introducing English earlier than the class III but it clashed with the Government of India's declared policy that the medium of instruction in first three classes will be exclusively vernacular.

The Teaching of Hygiene as Part of School Curricula:

The curriculum for girls' schools in Western Bengal includes a syllabus for hygiene and domestic economy beginning from class I up to the sixth standard. It was compulsory for girls' schools in Western Bengal to follow this syllabus throughout the first six years of a girl's education. Eastern Bengal, on the other hand, did not introduce hygiene into the curriculum until the students crossed the primary stage (classes I to IV) and had progressed to the middle stage which began with class V. Hygiene was taught in classes V to VII and the syllabus consisted of subjects such as cleanliness, ventilation, exercise, filtered water, drains etc. In classes VIII and IX the care for the sick and care of children was added to the syllabus on hygiene.[54] There were primers covering the syllabus called *Susrusha* (health care) and *Santanpalan* (child care) which were to be used. It appears from the report of school inspectresses that generally Christian missionary schools took the matter of hygiene seriously and treated the subject accordingly. Schools under local management, however, failed to impress the school inspectress regarding the teaching about health and hygiene.[55]

The importance given to the teaching of health and hygiene was made more pronounced by the introduction of a medal for this subject offered by Her Excellency the Countess of Ronaldshay in 1920. Her husband, Lord Ronaldshay was Governor of Bengal from 1917 to 1922. An examination was held for the first time in that year in the Dacca Circle. The medal was for Eastern Bengal only. In West Bengal, because the subject of hygiene was not so popular as a component of the school curriculum, a complete course of hygiene, First Aid work and elementary nursing was drawn up in 1920 and it was made part of the training course for all

[54] Progress of Education in Bengal, 1912-13 to 1916-17, the Fifth Quinquennial Review, by W.W. Hornell, C.I.E., (Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, 1918), pp. 112-113.
[55] *Ibid.*, p. 113.

vernacular teachers so that they could imbibe the students about the necessity of hygiene.[56] Hygiene and first-aid lessons was also to be undertaken in the zenana classes under the aegis of a lady doctor beginning from 1920.[57]

First Aid and hygiene became part of the curriculum in high schools under Government management. A lecturer was appointed in the 1919-1920 academic year specially to lecture on first-aid and hygiene to the senior pupils of the Eden High School, Dacca.[58] In the same academic year lessons on first-aid and infant-rearing were also started in the Vidyamayee High School, Mymensingh. The Inspectress of Schools Miss Brock was frustrated about the lack of teachers able to teach domestic science, sanitation, physical education, art work and science in the High English and higher secondary schools which were aided and also schools managed by the Government. She strongly recommended that two State scholarships be introduced to enable two female teachers to train at the Gloucester School of Domestic Science in England.[59]

Physical Exercise:

The report of 1919-20 of the School Inspectress Miss Brock voiced total frustration about the lack of awareness about the necessity of physical exercise and physical education in the school curricula. She mentions that in several high schools there is not even a central hall where girls can take exercise if outdoor exercise is not possible for reasons of *purdah*. The Mission schools are said to be far better off as they have large halls where physical exercise is possible.

Cookery:

In the academic year 1920-21, in Eastern Bengal, a diploma in cookery was started.[60] The course in cookery included theoretical aspects of cooking like the nutritional value of different food groups and the way to preserve nutrition during cooking, etc. with practical demonstrations. Examinations were taken on both theoretical and practical aspects. It was much more popular

[56] Report on Public Instruction in Bengal for 1920-21 (Calcutta: The Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, 1922), p. 16.
[57] Report on Public Instruction in Bengal for 1919-20 (Calcutta: The Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, 1921), compiled by W.W. Hornell, Director of Public Instruction, Bengal, p. 18.
[58] Ibid., p.17-18.
[59] *Ibid.*, p. 18.
[60] *Op. Cit.*, p. 16.

than health and hygiene. Years later, cookery, along with health and hygiene formed the curriculum of Home Economics.

Annulment of the Partition of Bengal and its Impact on Curriculum:

After the partition of Bengal was annulled in 1912, the Education Department woke up to the realization that the same curriculum has to be followed for Hindu and Muslim girls. Hitherto, Hindus and Muslims followed a different course of study. There was, also in the post-annulment period, more concern from the government as to what the content of female education presently was and what it should be. The general impression was that the existing Education curriculum was not suitable for girls. In a government circular of 1916, a very generalized but keen observation regarding society, the family, girls, and education was made. The circular observed that there was an increased demand in society for female education.[61] But the second observation in that circular summed up the whole philosophy of what purpose female education should serve, and, as such, had a direct bearing on the issue of how the curriculum for girls should be formulated. The Government of India observed that:

"Apart from the general reason for the increasing demand for female education, it may be observed that where the joint-family system has hitherto prevailed in India it is now breaking up. Families composed of only the father and the mother and their children are becoming more common. Girls and young women are therefore becoming the heads of families without being able to rely, as in former days, upon the advice and care of older relations and the duty of bringing up the children devolves upon them. The health and physical efficiency of the latter is a national concern and it cannot be secured without the education of mothers and their co-operation."[62]

Thus, the general official stance in 1916 completely ignored the necessity of an education geared to obtain a job and work outside the constraints of the family and the home, regardless of the fact that the University of Calcutta had produced female graduates by then and the Campbell Medical School in Calcutta and the Mitford Medical School in Dhaka had produced lady doctors. It is

[61] Education Department Circular No. 838-849, Assam Secretariat, Education A Proceedings, October 1916, File No. E-230-E. of 1916, NAL,B.

[62] *Ibid.*, p. 2.

true that those numbers were extremely limited, but that some women were taking large strides towards preparing themselves for the job market was what mattered most. However, regarding the curriculum for primary education:

> "There is, in many places, a general desire for religious education, and for education in music. It is also generally felt that women should be educated in all that concerns enlightened mothering, a good standard of maternal physique, better care of infancy, appropriate feeding, care and management of children, effective attention to children's diseases, and generally their physical condition, good sanitary environment, and other matters of domestic concern. Many, again, think that girls should also receive English education."[63]

The choices expressed above regarding the nature of education imparted to girls resulted from the survey the governments of Punjab and Bengal had conducted with the questionnaire containing the twenty-four questions to determine what the attitude towards education was generally.

The Female Education Committee had begun with high ambitions. The effort the members put into while making recommendations to improve female education were commendable as they were well-thought out and would have brought about real change if their plans had been implemented. But before any of the recommendations could be adopted for implementation, the Partition of Bengal was annulled. The separate Education Department for Eastern Bengal and Assam was abolished. The Female Education Committee became defunct and the voluminous files bearing the work of the Committee gathered dust on the shelves and eventually the whole exercise turned into nothing more than rhetoric. The members had no 'real' power to bring about change. At the height of imperialism, the colonial bureaucratic machine was unperturbed by the hugely ambitious projects that the Female Education Committee wanted to take up but failed.

School primers:

[63] *Ibid.* The circular was from the Hon'ble Sir E.D. Maclagan, Secretary to the Government of India, to the Secretaries of the Departments of Education of Bengal, Bombay, Madras, the United Provinces, Punjab, Burma, Bihar and Orissa, Chief Commissioners of the Central Provinces, Assam, Coorg, and Delhi, Chief Commissioner and Agent to the Governer-General in the North-West Frontier Province.

Three groups cooperated among themselves to form the Calcutta School Book Society in May, 1817. The three were: (a) government officials who were entrusted with the work of forming an education policy and implementing it; (b) Well-to-do local gentlemen who were well known among government circles and showed an interest in the dissemination of knowledge of the kind the ruler approved of; and, (c) Christian missionaries whose aim it was to achieve Proselytization through educating the masses. The objective of the Calcutta Book Society was: 'the preparation, publication and cheap or gratuitous supply of works useful in schools and seminaries of learning.'[64]

The Female Education Committee wanted to ensure that readers in girls' schools were thoroughly suitable for girls, well got up and prepared in as attractive a manner as possible. A seven-member Sub-Committee was formed to deal with this question. The Sub-Committee was headed by Mrs. Chatterjee, while the Secretary was a missionary, Miss Williamson of the Baptist Zenana Mission, Dacca, who was to be assisted by another missionary, Revd. Mr. Noble. There were two more missionaries in the group of seven. They were Revd. Mr. Guru Das Chakrabarti and the Revd. Mr. Teignmouth Shore. The decorative members were the Hon'ble Khan Bahadur Syed Nawab Ali Chowdhuri and Rai Kali Prasanna Ghose Bahadur. The Provincial Muhammadan Association was to nominate a member. There was a significant lack of Hindu representation in the Sub-Committee. The functions of the Sub-Committee was: (a) to select books or passages from existing educational or other works; (b) to suggest what text-books and readers should be written specially for the purpose of girls' schools; and, (c) to suggest the names of writers for those books, and generally to advise as to their contents and to the manner in which they should be prepared. The Sub-Committee was to report to the Director of Public Instruction while he would then solicit the advice of the Bengal Text-Book Committee and the Text-Book Committee for the Province of Eastern Bengal and Assam regarding the final reading list.[65]

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[64] N.L. Basak, 'Origin and Role of the Calcutta School Book Society in Promoting the Cause of Education in India, Especially Vernacular Education in Bengal (1817-1835)', *Bengal Past and Present* , vol. 78, No. 145 (Jan.-June 1959), p. 36, cited in Kazi Shahidullah, *Patshalas Into Schools: The development of indigenous elementary education in Bengal, 1854-1905* (Calcutta: Firma KLM Private Limited), 1987, p. 25.

[65] Proceedings of the Meetings of the Female Education Committee, Eastern Bengal and Assam, held at Dacca on the 26th to 29th February 1908.

Separate text-book committees were maintained in Calcutta and Dacca to advise the Education Department in the approval of text-books for use in the West and Eastern Bengal. It had been was standard practice since the Home Department Resolution No. 101 of April, 1877 and it was again advised by the Education Commission of 1882 that each province should have its own books suitable to its own requirements. However, a resolution passed in 1901 stated "that it was never intended that the text-books committees should themselves prescribe the text-books to be adopted in schools. Their function was merely to advise Government. The ultimate authority was the Local Government and the Local Government should retain the right of prescribing a text on any particular subject for use in all schools."[66]The Calcutta Committee received 424 books, of which 162 were approved, 205 were rejected, 3 books were submitted to this office (office of the director of public instruction) for disposoal and the remaining 54 books were left over for the consideration of the committee in June 1920. The Dacca Committee examined 423 books, of which 161 were approved. A committee consisting of officials and non-officials was appointed in 1919 to advise Government on certain matters connected with the constitution and functions of text-book committees in Bengal.[67]

The Curriculum for Zenana Classes:

The Female Education Committee, after long deliberations, prepared the following curriculum for zenana classes:[68]

Class I-A:

Reading: Bengali Primer, Part I, by Macmillian & Company.

Writing: Letters and words of two or three letters.

Arithmatic: Analysis of numbers 1-20 with the help of concrete material and pictures.

Needlework: Running, hemming and stitching.

Hygiene: Elementary practical hygiene to be taught orally. Simple rules of health.

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[66] Government of Bengal, Education (A) Proceedings for the month of June, 1907, File 3-P/4, Nos. 17-18, NAL,B.
[67] *Ibid.*, p. 25.
[68] Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, Education Department, Education A Proceedings, January 1912, Nos. 53-56, p. 60.

Class I-B:

Reading: Bengali Primer, Part II.

Writing: Transcription from the Reader, Dictation, Handwriting from copy book.

Arithmetic: Comprehension of concrete numbers 1-100. Simple work in the four simple rules, totals not exceeding 100. Multiplication and division to proceed at first by a series of additions and subtractions.

Needlework: Button holes, patching, darning.

Hygiene: Elementary practical Hygiene to be taught orally. Simple rules of health.

Class II:

Reading: *Naba Shikha* by Srinath Chanda (50 pages). Prose and poetry.

Writing: Dictation, simple letter writing, easy compositions, gist of lessons.

Grammar: Parts of speech.

Arithmetic: Comprehension of concrete numbers up to 1,000. Four simple rules with greater difficulty. Totals not exceeding 1,000. Multiplication and Division to proceed by factors, building up of and memorizing tables up to ten by sixteen, *kara, ganda* and *pan*. Ideas of half and one-fourth taught by concrete examples and afterwards with reference to abstract numbers.

Needlework: Kurta, Chemises, Drawers (pyjama), petticoat.

Class-III:

Reading: *Charu Shahitya*, by Abinash Chandra Gupta (half the book).

Writing: Gist of lessons, easy essays. Simple expression of thoughts.

Arithmetic: Comprehension of numbers up to 10,000. Indian money tables. Compound addition and subtraction. Tables 16 by 10, 10 by ¼, 10 by ½, 10 by ¾, 10 by 1¼,

Grammar: *Sandhi* and analysis.

Needlework: Jackets and frocks.

Class-IV:

Reading: *Prabandha Kusum* (80 pages).

Writing: Essay writing on different subjects, such as nursing, home management, children training, etc.

Arithmetic: Fractions.

Grammar: Parsing.

Needlework: Fancy work, such as crochet, embroidery.

Instructions in reading, writing, arithmetic, needlework and hygiene were taught throughout class I to IV. As the instruction advanced, Grammar was added.

Zenana education had made much progress in Eastern Bengal and it was felt in official circles that more should be done to improve it.[69] It was thought that some kind of industrial education should be given in the zenana classes so that women could utilize their education to earn a livelihood if necessary. Handkerchief making, pillow lace knitting, crochet lace making, drawn thread work etc. were thought to some industries that could be introduced in the zenana classes to make it more attractive for those who were interested in achieving higher levels of skills. Instead of simple education those additional skills would allow poor widows to earn their living to some extent. Meeting the special needs of a locality was also thought to be a necessary prerequisite for zenana centers. Also, the prevalent system of the visit of a zenana mistress to a center only twice a week was felt to be fairly inadequate.[70]

Concluding Remarks:

The discourse on what girls should be taught was the natural outcome when the discourse on whether girls should be given education at all ended in the West in favour of recognizing that girls have equal right to receiving an education. Jean Jacques Roussuou (1712-1778), the 'enlightened' philosopher of eighteenth century Europe led the discourse by emphatically pointing out the differences between male and female: the former was characterized by reason, strength, and autonomy; the latter was emotional, weak, and obedient.

The curriculum was shaped and formed in such a manner so that the prevailing notions of domesticity, femininity, docility, chastity and the like were not challenged. As expected by the

[69] Report on the Progress of Education in Eastern Bengal and Assam During the Years 1907-1908 to 1911-1912, vol. 1. (Calcutta: The Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, 1913.
[70] Ibid.

formulators of the curriculum, the socially constructed notion of the 'ideal home-maker' was perpetuated through the curriculum. Careful consideration was given so that women's education would maintain, rather than challenge the status quo. As in 19th century England,[71] so in India of the same period, female education was not meant to train the girls for any profession or for government service. "Education for girls...was an attempt to transplant into Indian soil the Victorian ideal of the woman as 'housewife', as the presiding deity of home and hearth, whose business in life was to create fro her husband a pleasurable haven when he returned home from each days tiring business in the harsh, competitive outside world" says Madhu Kishwar while examining the women's question in Punjab.[72] The Hindu-Muslim religio-cultural divide that was a unique feature of Bengal in general and Eastern Bengal in particular became acutely apparent.

After all is said about educational guidelines and guiding principles and philosophies, the ultimate test of a Government's sincerity towards a cause comes when it is time to disburse funds for the implementation of policies. The Female Education Committee and its various sub-committees produced long lists of recommendations for the improvement of female education which were equally applicable to the western part of Bengal after the partition was annulled. But the matter of how much of the required funds could be obtained remained the ultimate question to be settled between the rhetoric of ideology and the reality of practical implementation.

[71] June Purvis, "Using Primary Sources When Researching Women's History from a Feminist Perspective", *Women's History Review*, volume. 1, Number 2, 1992.
[72] Kishwar, Madhu ,'The Daughters of Aryavarta' in Sumit Sarkar and Tanika Sarkar (eds.), *Women and Social Reform in Modern India: A Reader*, vol. 1 (New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2007), p. 306.

Chapter 5

Financing Female Education

The introduction of the Western system of education in India in the nineteenth century, as we have so far gathered from previous chapters, was not characterized by any positive attitude. The new education system was built on the assumption that Western science and literature far surpassed, in superiority, the whole gamut of knowledge accumulated in the East, that "...a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia."[1] The objective in the nineteenth century was to produce locally a pool of clerks for the ever-growing colonial bureaucratic machine. The indigenous system of education that existed in pre-colonial times was deemed unfit for this particular colonial purpose. As such, the schooling of the masses came to be regarded as a painful necessity. Thus, for all practical purposes, in an education system that was born out of negative virtue, the over-riding philosophy turned out to be how to devise a method that would be cheap, but efficient. In addition to the quest for cheapness and efficiency, policy makers continued the search to find out ways for the community to pay for the education for its children. Education, for both girls and boys, in pre-colonial times, was a private enterprise. In colonial times, it became a joint venture of private and government financing.

In the semi-feudal economy of pre-colonial Bengal, *pathshala*s and *tol*s, educational institutions for Hindu children and *madrassah*s and *maktab*s, institutions for the Muslims, were established and maintained by donations from the landed aristocracy. Educational projects initiated by the gentry generally received grants of rent-free land. In some cases these institutions were set up through the subscription and support of the local community, or, by the teacher himself. These indigenous institutions rarely had a school-

[1] From a Minute by T.B. Macaulay, 2nd February, 1835, on 'English versus Sanskrit as a Vehicle for Teaching,' in Ramsay Muir, *The Making of British India, 1756-1858: Described in a Series of Dispatches, Treaties, Statutes, And Other Documents, Selected And Edited With Introductions And Notes* (Lahore: Oxford University Press, 1969, first published in England by Manchester University Press, 1915), p. 298.

house of their own. Classes were conducted in the house of the teacher or that of a wealthy patron, or, in the village temple or the portico of the mosque. Sometimes classes were held in the open air, under the shade of a tree. The little girls of the village or the town were not barred from attending these *pathshala*s and *madrassah*s. Fees for attending these institutions were mostly met in kind, in the form of food items and clothing. In some cases, where a wealthy patron could be found, the *guru* received remuneration through his benevolence and in other cases, each scholar was charged a monthly fee. In the absence of any fixed rule of subscription as there was no public provision for the *guru*s, children of rich parents generally paid more than the children of the poor, while the very poor were often taught gratuitously.[2] The *Qanun-i-Islam* [Customs in Islam] written in 1832 by Ja'far Sharif, a *munshi* (or tutor), mentions how, according to Muslim custom, the tutor is bestowed with gifts after a boy or girl finishes reading the Koran.[3] Besides that, at every religious or social festival, the tutor receives gifts of clothing or cash.

As Bengal got caught in the colonial net in the 18th century and the economic and political basis of the old society was shattered, large-scale resumption of *lakheraj* or rent-free land broke the entire system of patron-client relationships in the education sector. This sector languished as the colonial economy went through the first stages of revenue appropriation and exploitation through trade monopoly, as Bipan Chandra analyses[4]. In the third and final stage of colonialism described by Chandra, the state exerted intensive political and administrative control over the colony. Colonial administration sought to permeate every pore of colonial society. To win over the colonized people, the state promised modernization, and the implementation of the promise led to state patronization of education. Such patronization was bestowed not so much out of state altruism as it was out of necessity. Sociologists in interpreting the inter-relationship between state, economy, and education, analyze why the state invests in education. They asses that, "the

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[2] See Kazi Shahidullah, *Patshalas into Schools*, p. 12.
[3] Sharif, Ja'far, *Islam in India or the Qanun-i-Islam*, trs. by G.A. Herklots, ed. by William Crooke, London, Oxford University Press, 1875, 1921, cited in Law, Narendra Nath, *Promotion of Learning in India During Mohammaden Rule*, IAD Oriental Series:14, Idarah-I Adabiyat-I Delli, Delhi, 1973.
[4] See Chandra, Bipan, *Essays on Colonialism* (New Delhi: Orient Longman Limited, first published, 1999, reprint, 2000), pp. 58-77.

economy depends on the education system to provide future workers with skills; the education system depends on the economy for funds."[5] To build an education system that would serve the needs of the state, the state would have to exert control over the system and that control would have to come through education financing. For the average male, education beyond the primary and secondary stage offered benefits in the form of increased earning power and access to better jobs. The question, in the context of this study, however, was: would investing in female education provide the state with future skilled workers?

In the context of late nineteenth and early twentieth century Bengal, the answer to the question posed above would have to be in the negative, as woman's work in general was still not an acceptable social norm. Female education was an offshoot of the modernization process that was begun in the second half of the nineteenth century and gained full momentum by the beginning of the twentieth. As the concept of woman's work had not developed in the nineteenth century other than the option of teaching, the function of female education remained latent. Whatever skills that were acquired through education were to be applied in the confines of the home, through domestic labor which would bring indirect benefits such as better educational achievements of her children, better standards of family health and hygiene, better care for the infant and the old, and possibly, a lower birth rate.[6] Chances were extremely low that the children of educated mothers would drop out of school, thus reducing the high rate of wastage prevalent mostly in the female population of school-going age. The personal satisfaction, pride, sense of achievement and sense of self-worth that such indirect benefits bring a woman are termed by modern day economists as "psychic income."[7] For the family, however, the decision to invest in educating a girl is influenced by the fact that education, even a rudimentary one, increases manifold the likelihood of finding a highly placed husband for her. Thus investment in female education lacked direct economic gain and that

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[5] Gelles, J. Richard and Levine, Ann, *Sociology: An Introduction* (New York: McGraw-Hill Inc., 5th edition, 1995), p. 65.
[6] See Woodhall, Maureen, 'Investment in Women: A Reappraisal of the Concept of Human Capital', *International Review of Education*, XIX/1973/1, Special Number: The Education of Women, The UNESCO Institute for Education, pp. 9-29.
[7] Ibid.

manifested itself in different forms, like, smaller allocation of private and state funds in this sector which ultimately resulted in lower pay for female teachers, fewer female Inspectresses, less priority towards infrastructural development and insufficient attempts at training teachers. The average annual cost of maintaining a primary girls' school, according an assessment of 1906-07, was Rs. 33.9, of which public funds accounted for Rs. 26.2 and private funds accounted for Rs. 7.7.[8] The average cost of educating a girl from the same sources was Rs. 1.4 and Rs. 0.4 respectively.[9] The average annual cost of educating a boy during the same time period was Rs. 5.1, although the sources of income were the same.[10]

Sources of Funds:

A major methodological difficulty faced while searching for proportionate sources of financing for female education --- central, local and private --- has been the absence of separate financial data for the region of Eastern Bengal. The minutes of the Female Education Committee constituted during the Partition Interlude (1905-1911) thus provide highly valuable data that has been used in this chapter. Of the data presented, a certain degree of error may be allowed, although it does not affect the general argument that the actual and desired expenditure for female education remained disproportionate to the funds made available for that purpose. This anomaly affected the growth of female education which had more potential than it actually achieved during the time period of this study. The source of funds has been categorized under four heads: (a) grant-in-aid, (b) endowments and fees, (c) income in kind, and, (d) local sources.

(a) Grant-in-Aid:

The Wood's Education Despatch of 1854 laid down that female education would be equally aided by the state through the apparatus of the grants-in-aid system introduced by

[8] 'Report on the Progress of Education in Eastern Bengal and Assam during the years 1901-1902 to 1906-1907,' (Shillong: Eastern Bengal and Assam Secretariat Printing Office, 1907), vol. 1, p. 85.
[9] Ibid.
[10] Ibid., p. 10.

the Despatch. The introduction of the system was the *modus operandi* through which Government sought to exert control over the general system of education, which ultimately resulted in the dissolution of the indigenous system of education in India.

The grant-in-aid was the only recurring aid received by schools from the central government. The other form of central aid was the imperial grant which was non-recurring. The apportionment of the imperial grant was made at the discretion of the Education Department as it saw fit. Spending on female education did not feature in the first grant of one lac rupees made in 1813. A hundred years later, in 1913, out of an imperial grant of Rs. 10,00,000, Rs. 84,000 was specifically allocated for expenditure on girls, and that too, for Muslim girls.[11] Such grants, as received from time to time by school management committees, were mostly spent on infrastructural development like buildings and equipment.

The fundamental principle of the grant-in-aid system which had been successfully carried out in England and was introduced in India in 1854, was essentially a simple contribution to the general expenses of a school set up by local initiative. Educational spending was a sector not traditionally borne entirely by government and the grant was a gesture on the part of the government to encourage and stimulate voluntary efforts of the people towards the promotion of education. To qualify to become a recipient of the grant, schools would have to submit to government inspection, follow government approved curriculum and charge from their pupils some tuition fee, however small. In the indigenous system, the pupils were free to pay their teachers in cash or kind on suitable occasions. The requirement of paying regular fees in cash every month was a burden to parents in a social condition where the idea of educating girls had not yet taken root and where investing in a girl's education was not insurance for future support for ageing parents. The amount of the grant was to be determined according to the number of pupils and the continuation of the same depended on the report of the inspectors. Schools that could not perform well in examinations and institutions where school attendance was

[11] Council Question by the Hon'ble Mr. G.H.C. Ariff, GOB, Gen. Dept. Edu. (A) Proceedings for the month of December 1914, File 11-C/61/1-2, Nos. 26-27, NA, B.

poor were threatened with cancellation of the grant. Directors of Public Instruction and School Inspectors condemned such a practice of grant as "demoralizing." It disorganized the finances of schools because of fluctuations in the grant. The rules led school management committees to sometimes resort to unfair practices to continue the grant. For example, Mrs. Wheeler, Inspectress of Schools, Calcutta, reported to C.A. Martin, the DPI in 1894, that on inspection, she found that names of girls were kept on the rolls, though they seldom or never attended. This was done to ensure attendance grants.[12] Most important of all, the prerequisites to receiving grant-in-aid were deemed as non-conducive to the spread of female education which needed special care and encouragement at the nascent stage of its development.

The historical Despatch of 1854 was quickly followed by another less discussed Despatch in 1859 after the British Crown took over the administration of India. The new Despatch re-affirmed the policy formulated in 1854 and sought to find new ways to relieve Government of the pressure of education finances. It was suggested that local rates should be imposed to meet the cost of mass education. The Government of India modified that idea by deciding that local rates would take the form of a cess on land revenue, but the income from that cess would be spent not just for education but for all objects of local utility, thus pushing the matter of education to a low position in the list of priorities. However, the existence of a permanent settlement of land revenue in operation since 1793 prevented the Education Department of the Bengal Presidency from enjoying the benefits of a local fund cess as enjoyed by the other provinces. Deprived from the levy from land revenue, municipalities in Bengal lagged far behind in education spending compared to other provinces with the exception of Assam only. The Education Commission gave the following statistics to point out the inadequacy of spending by local agencies:[13]

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[12] 'Rules for the Distribution of Grants-in-Aid to Girls' Schools ,' Letter from C.A. Martin, Esq., DPI, Bengal to The Secretary of the Government of Bengal, General Department, B Proceedings, Nos. 28-29, File 2-F/1-1, September, 1896, West Bengal State Archives.

[13] *Report of the Indian Education Commission*, p. 158, cited in Nurullah and Naik, p. 189.

Province	Percentage of expenditure on education to the total income of Municipalities
Punjab	5.29
Madras	4.09
Central Provinces	3.01
North-Western Province and Oudh	1.77
Berar	1.33
Bombay	1.17
Bengal	0.48
Assam	0.39

The figure shown above depicting education expenditure in Bengal not only includes the eastern and western parts of Bengal, but is also inclusive of boys' and girls' education. How little incentive female education got under the circumstances is easily discernible. By the beginning of the twentieth century, financing female education had become a major concern for government as imperial policy became more paternalistic. Greater demands were being made on public funds. According to the first quinquennial review of the twentieth century (1902-03 to 1906-07), the grants carved out of public funds in addition to the imperial grant-in-aid were: (a) grant-in aid from provincial revenues; (b) primary grant through the Department in non-Board areas; (c) grants to model primary schools out of the imperial allotment of 1902-03; (d) fixed stipends from District and Municipal funds; and, (e) subsistence and further allowance from local funds.[14]

The rules of the grants-in-aid system required that the grant should not exceed in amount the sums to be expended from private sources and that Municipal contributions would be reckoned as receipts from public sources, thus reducing the Government grant accordingly. But it had long been recognized that even at the turn of the century, female education continued to need special encouragement. Therefore, in 1907, amendments were made to relax the rules for girls' schools so that contribution received from a

[14] *Progress of Education in Bengal*, Third Quinquennial Review, 1902-03 to 1906-07, West Bengal State Archives.

Municipality or a District Board would not reduce the grant admissible under the grants-in-aid rules.[15] However, it was still maintained that for primary, middle, training and special schools, in which the expenditure did not exceed Rs. 40 a month, the grant would never exceed the sum equal to the full amount of the income guaranteed from other sources.[16] For example, if we were to randomly take a few schools in Eastern Bengal which were in receipt of grant-in-aid to cite as models, we would see that the Barisal Middle English Girls' School in the Dhaka Division, which had an income of Rs. 83 a month from subscriptions, fees, Municipality contributions, received a Government grant of Rs. 50, bringing the total income to Rs. 133 a month.[17] In the Rajshahi Division, the Bogra Middle Vernacular Girls' School had a monthly income of Rs. 48 of which public subscription accounted for Rs. 25 and the rest came from a Municipal grant of Rs. 7 and the Government grant of Rs. 16 per month.[18] The Pabna Girls' School and the Rangpur Girls' School, both in the Rajshahi Division received monthly Government grants of Rs. 35 and Rs. 25 respectively. The financial statements of schools in Chandpur, Noakhali, Patuakhali, Kishoreganj, Gaibandha, Narayanganj, Faridpur, Chittagong, Barisal, Rangpur, Dinajpur and Dhaka show the receipt of income from other sources being two times the amount of the Government grant received. As per official calculation, by the first decade of the twentieth century, Government was aiding 2,300 girls' schools in Eastern Bengal at the rate of Rs. 25 a month as grant-in-aid, which amounted to Rs. 57,500 annually.[19] Recommendations by the Female Education Committee (the committee set up in Dhaka in 1908 to find ways to improve the condition of female education in the new province of Eastern Bengal and Assam) to increase the monthly grant-in-aid to Rs. 60 a month did not materialize.

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[15] 'Certain amendments to Rules 12 & 17 of the Rules of Grants-in-Aid to schools in order to enable the Education Department to make larger grants to girls' schools,' General Department Education Branch (A) Proceedings for the month of December, 1907, File 10-R/4, Progs. 11-12, West Bengal State Archives.

[16] Ibid.

[17] 'Improvements in Chief Girls' Schools at District Headquarters, i.e., *Zilla* Girls' Schools,' *Report on Female Education, 1911*, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, Edu. (A) Progs. for the month of January, 1912, File No. E/25-E, Nos. 53-56, p. 27. NA, B.

[18] Ibid., p. 28.

[19] Letter from Henry Sharp, DPI, to Chief Secretary, Govt. of India, Home Dept., Bengal Education (A) Proceedings for the month of January, 1910, File No. E/203-E of 1909. NA, B.

(b) Endowments and Private Sources:

Endowments are an important additional source of income for the public education system all over the world. In the context of Eastern Bengal in the late nineteenth century, endowments from local zamindars and wealthy patrons were more often than not the prerequisite to setting up girls' schools. The first known girls' school to be opened in Dhaka, the Bangla Bazar Girls' School, was founded in 1856 by a small group of Brahmo reformers led by Ananda Mohan Das and Babu Dina Bandhu Mallick and supported by several other patrons. The Adult Female School was established in 1873 in Dhaka because of similar patronage of the Dhaka Brahmos --- Nabakanta, Brajasundar Mitra, Dinnath Sen, Abhay Dutt and Kali Prashanna Ghosh. This school later became the famous Eden Female School in 1878 and was selected to be the only English High School in Eastern Bengal which was managed by Government. However, the fact remains that the school would not have come into existence had it not been for the effort of the local philanthropists.

The philanthropy of Nawab Faizunnessa Chaudhurani, zamindar of Comilla and the zamindars of Muktagachha in Mymensingh and their zeal for the enlightenment of their subjects is well-known. The Nawab Faizunnessa Girls' High School in Comilla (established in 1873) and the Bidyamoyee School in Mymensingh (originally established as the Alexander Girls' School in 1873) still stand today bearing proudly the names of their founders. Among the other famous schools established and maintained by such endowments are the Bindubashini Girls' School established in 1882 by Monmoth Roy, zamindar of Santosh, Tangail, and the Khastagir Girls' School established in Chittagong in 1878 by Doctor Annadacharan Khastagir. Apart from these landmark institutions, different districts of Eastern Bengal were dotted with many other schools that were established and maintained through endowments and donations from locals which are not as famous but have nevertheless played a huge part in the social amelioration of the region. The Bindeswari Girls' School in Natore, established and maintained by the Sukul family, the Boalia P.N. Girls' School maintained by the Dighapatia Estate and the Naugaon Girls' School, maintained by local patrons were a few such institutions of the

Rajshahi Division.[20] Institutions under local patronage were also set up in the northern regions of Dinajpur, Gaibandha and Jalpaiguri, and eventually came to be partially aided by Government.[21]

The nineteenth century was the age of British overseas missionary expansion. New missions grew in England, Scotland and Wales exclusively for doing evangelical work in the colonies that Britain had acquired. Missionary bodies were also formed in North America and Australia which sent overseas missions to British colonies. The most significant feature of these missions were, for the first time in the history of the missionary movement, women missionaries were inducted and sent overseas to proselytize among fellow women of the heathen communities. Subscriptions poured in and the missionary movement reached unprecedented heights in the nineteenth century before beginning to wane after the First World War (1914-1918). As the chosen method of proselytization, the missionaries took the initiative of setting up the first formal educational institutions for girls which remain as their lasting legacy in the erstwhile colonies of the British Empire. Some schools of the Church of England, the Baptist Mission, the Diocesan Mission, the Free Church of Scotland, the London Mission, the Methodist Church, the Scotch Mission, the Wesleyan Mission and the American Mission were aided from the Grant-in-Aid Fund but the majority of them operated on mission resources.[22] The missionary factor in the spread of female education in Eastern Bengal has been discussed in chapter one.

(c) Fees and Income in Kind:

A structured fee system in educational institutions was introduced in Bengal during the colonial period. The fee system caused the education sector to make one more break with tradition. However, the fee system had a dual effect in it that was detrimental to the cause of girls' education during the initial years of its implementation. First of all, the

[20] Ibid., 'Financial Statements of Zillah Girls' Schools,' p. 43.
[21] Ibid., p. 44.
[22] 'General Report on Public Instruction, Bengal, for 1899-1900,' GOB, General Department, Education Branch, File 8-R/4/1-5, Proceedings Nos. 20-26, January 1901. NA, B.

introduction of the payment of monthly fees became a prohibitive factor for a certain number of families who were hard pressed, financially, to afford that amount. Secondly, when the question of affordability arose, naturally, the male child was preferred over the female child on whom the investment had some promise of return.

Income in kind included land for schools, the donation of buildings, lodging for teachers and staff, the donation of furniture, books and supplies, etc. Female education, at the initial stage, depended heavily on this mode of income. The schools established by the zamindars and other local patrons were invariably built on the land they donated or were housed in their own buildings.

(d) Provincial Sources of Income:

It was never the colonial government's intention to take full responsibility for the education of its subjects. The Despatch of 1854 had mentioned that the introduction of the system of the grants-in-aid should "foster a spirit of reliance upon local exertions, and should in course of time render it possible to close or transfer to the management of local bodies many of the existing institutions."[23] By the time the recommendations of the Hunter Commission were formulated, in 1882, the mechanisms for the transfer of responsibility had been brought into force.

The municipalities of Dhaka, Chittagong and Comilla had been created under the Municipal Act of 1864.[24] For each municipality, a Municipal Board was created with the District Magistrate as the ex-officio Chairman of the Board and 17 to 21 nominated commissioners, of whom 7 were to be local residents. The Municipal Board was

[23] 'Resolution by the Government of India, Home Department, Nos. 199-211, dated the 11th March 1904, reviewing the system of education in India and laying down Government policy with regard to it', GOB, General Dept., June, 1904, File 10-C/16, Nos. 50-51, NA,B.

[24] For more about the development of local self-government, see Harun-or-Rashid, 'Stages of Sate Formation: Colonial Period', in Emajuddin Ahamed and Harun-or-Rashid (eds.), *State and* Culture, Cultural Survey of Bangladesh Series-3 (Dhaka: Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, 2007), pp. 65-80, and, Barman, Dalem Chandra, 'Local Self-Government' in Sirajul Islam (ed.), *History of Bangladesh, 1704-1971*, volume one, Political History (Dhaka: Asiatic Society of Bangladesh,2nd edition, 1997), pp. 495-515.

entrusted with the responsibility of generating funds for education in the locality. Also, in 1871, District Boards were created under the District Board Act, 1871, which was entrusted with functions of education administration like inspection and financial aid of educational institutions in the districts. Thus, under the new financial arrangement, there emerged four categories of schools. The categories were: (i) those managed by Government, (ii) those managed by District or Municipal Boards, (iii) those aided by Government or by District or Municipal Boards, and, finally, (iv) unaided schools. In Eastern Bengal, the Eden Female School in Dhaka was the only Government institution for girls. In 1878, the year the Eden Female School was established, the total cost of the school was estimated at Rs. 385 per month, of which Rs. 360 per month was contributed by Government.[25] By 1904, excluding contingencies and stationery, the monthly cost of the school came to Rs. 563 which had a student population of 112, not even one of whom was a Muslim. The house rent had increased from Rs. 70 in 1878 to Rs. 125 in 1904.[26]

The Municipal and District Boards were, more often than not, starved of funds and naturally spending for the establishment of girls' schools was always at the bottom of the list of priorities. Such funds as were made available were never adequate for what was required, as can be gathered from reports of Assistant Inspectors of schools: "Government gives but a trifle for female education, nor are the District Boards very liberal in their support, and as it has no money value no great public support can be expected. It is the Government that must take the initiative in the promotion of female education. "[27]

The Indian Education Commission of 1882 recommended that funding for schools should come from provincial revenues, district funds and municipal funds and also recommended that funds should be kept aside every year for recurring expenses. As regards female education, the Commission recommended that municipal and other authorities deploy funds for girls' schools as they saw fit and that the government

[25] Letter from W.I. Shepherd, Chief Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, Education Department, Assam Secretariat, Sylhet (A) Proceedings, December, 1906, Nos. 1-9, NA,B.
[26] Ibid.
[27] General Report on Public Instruction, Bengal, for 1899-1900, Government of Bengal, Education Branch, File 8-R/4/1-5, Proceedings Nos. 20-26, January 1901, NA, B.

increase education grants for female education. Scholarships of various categories were recommended so that guardians would not feel the economic burden of sending female wards to school. Some of the provisions were implemented, others weren't. These recommendations were incorporated in the Local Self-Government Act of 1885 and greater responsibility was placed on the local Boards to finance education. However, in the census of 1901, it was found that only seven in a thousand of the female population who were of school-going age in Bengal had attained a rudimentary level of literacy.[28] Three decades after the responsibility was shifted to the local authorities, on reviewing the amount of grant/aid allocations for girls' primary education, the future of the progress of female education under the existing circumstances came under question in the Fifth Quinquennial Review (1912-13 to 1916-17) by W.W. Hornell. The vital question posed here regarding the right course for the future, was: should the Education Department seek to extend its initiative and control, or does the future of the primary education of girls rest with the local education authorities?[29] Given the preference for boys' education and the perennial lack of funds, Government had to recognize that the problem of adequate financing for female education demanded and would continue to demand the special intervention of the central authority. For the local authorities, education expenditure itself took a back seat as more pressing demands on public expenditure were for roads, hospitals, housing, sewage, supply of drinking water etc. In such a scenario, it is understandable that the district boards and municipalities would fail to devote the necessary attention to the subject of the education of girls. When it was decided that the cost of education would be borne by local bodies, no statutory provision in the Municipal Act was made to the effect that a prescribed percentage of the total income of the municipalities must be spent on education. As a result, the local bodies did not make as satisfactory a contribution to elementary education as was hoped for or was expected of them.

In four tables (Tables 5.1 to 5.4) provided below, we present some statistics showing the amount Municipalities and District Boards spent for female education in the

[28] *Resolution on Education Policy* dated 11th March, 1902, cited in Nurullah and Naik, p. 200.
[29] *Progress of Education in Bengal, 1912-13 to 1916-17*, Fifth Quinquennial Review by W.W. Hornell, C.I.E. (Calcutta: Bengal Secretarial Book Depot, 1918), p. 106, NA,B.

Dhaka, Chittagong, Rajshahi and Surma Valley Divisions in the fiscal year 1909-1910. It has been possible, because of the work of the Female Education Committee that was set up in 1907, after the partition of Bengal, to assess the condition of female education in Eastern Bengal and recommend appropriate reform measures, to procure separate statistics of income and expenditure for female education exclusively for the districts of Eastern Bengal. Without these statistics compiled by the Female Education Committee, it would have been extremely difficult, if not impossible, to separate the amounts from that spent in Bengal as a whole. Table 5.5 shows the sources of income and general statistics of expenditure in Eastern Bengal from 1906-07 to 1911-12. At the Simla Conference of July, 1906, it was decided that a special grant of ten lac rupees would be awarded from the imperial revenue for carrying out educational reforms in the primary education sector in Bengal. In view of the transfer of certain districts in October, 1905, to the newly created province of Eastern Bengal and Assam, it was decided that out of that grant, a sum of 3,33,000 rupees would be made over to that province.[30] The grant for reforms was inclusive of expenditure on buildings. The major portion of the grant, however, was spent for boys' education. At the time of the Partition of Bengal in 1905, of the total number of girls of school-going age, only 2.7 percent were attending school and of the total expenditure on education, only 2.4 percent was being expended on female education.[31]

[30] 'Expenditure from the special grant of ten lakhs for Primary Education during the year 1905-06', Bengal Education (A) Proceedings for the month of February, 1907, File 10-C/3, Nos. 56-61, NA, B.
[31] Letter from Henry Sharp, Esq., M.A., Director of Public Instruction, Eastern Bengal and Assam, to the Chief Secretary to the Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, Dated Shillong, 13th September, 1906, Assam Secretariat, Sylhet (A) Proceedings, Jan. 1906-March 1908, NA,B.

Table 5.1: Statistics showing amount spent on female education by Municipalities in the Dacca Division according to the report of the Female Education Committee in 1911.

Names of Places	Percentage of funds spent on education, 1909-1910	Percentage spent on female education	Amount in figures spent on female education	Number of girls' schools receiving aid	Amount spent on buildings for girls' schools	Amount spent on furniture for girls' schools	Amount spent on scholarships for girls' schools
Dhaka Division		Rs.—a.- p.	Rs.—a.- p.	Rs.—a.- p.	Rs.—a.- p.	Rs.—a.- p.	Rs.—a.-p.
Dhaka	1.4	18.7	1,120-0-0	13	....	....	....
Narayanganj	6.4	5.8	1,173-0-0	4	4,560-1-6	671-10-0	....
Mymensingh	9.31	35.3	414-0-0	4	....	175-0-0	....
Jamalpur	4.1	1.1	132-0-0	1	....	25-0-0	....
Kishorganj	25.6	3.2	64-0-0	3	10-0-0	....	....
Netrokona	5.3	3.2	288-0-0	4	....	....	....
Tangail	6.4	2.8	212-0-0	5	....	111-8-0	....
Faridpur	3.2	34.8	452-0-0	....	....	....	....
Madaripur	4.7	2.5	396-0-0	5	....	....	....
Barisal	4.87	1.43	288-0-0	4	36-0-0	....	....
Perojpur	6.0	4.0	580-0-0	3	300-0-0	200-0-0	....
Patuakhali	....	2.02	....	....	....	....	....

Source: Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, Education (A) Proceedings for the month of January 1912, File No. E/25-E, Nos. 53-56, Assam Secretariat (Sylhet Proceedings), National Archives, Bangladesh, Serial 75, Bundle 3, List 4.

Table 5.2: Statistics showing amount spent on female education by Municipalities in the Chittagong Division according to the report of the Female Education Committee in 1911.

Names of Places	Percentage of funds spent on education, 1909-1910	Percentage spent on female education	Amount in figures spent on female education	Number of girls' schools receiving aid	Amount spent on buildings for girls' schools	Amount spent on furniture for girls' schools	Amount spent on scholarships for girls' schools
Chittagong Division		Rs.—a.- p.	Rs.—a.- p.	Rs.—a.- p.	Rs.—a.- p.	Rs.—a.- p.	Rs.—a.-p.
Chittagong	3.6	.4	237-0-0	3	....	36-0-0	21
Comilla	3.2	.3	72-0-0	1	....	....	....
Brahmanbaria	3.5	.54	95-0-0	1	....	35-0-0	....
Chandpur	2.9	1.4	815-0-0	5	....	237-0-0	....
Noakhali	4.5	25.2	154-0-0	2	....	22-0-0	....

Source: Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, Education (A) Proceedings for the month of January 1912, File No. E/25-E, Nos. 53-56, Assam Secretariat (Sylhet Proceedings), National Archives, Bangladesh, Serial 75, Bundle 3, List 4.

Table 5.3: Statistics showing amount spent on female education by Municipalities in the Rajshahi Division according to the report of the Female Education Committee in 1911.

Names of Places	Percentage of funds spent on education, 1909-1910	Percentage spent on female education	Amount in figures spent on female education	Number of girls' schools receiving aid	Amount spent on buildings for girls' schools	Amount spent on furniture for girls' schools	Amount spent on scholarships for girls' schools
Rajshahi Division		Rs.—a.- p.	Rs.—a.- p.	Rs.—a.- p.	Rs.—a.- p.	Rs.—a.- p.	Rs.—a.- p.
Rampur Boalia	....	....	....	....	....	....	....
Natore	5.2	....	....	....	....	....	....
Dinajpur	6.7	.17	93-0-0	1	....	....	....
Jalpaiguri	7.9	0.8	120-0-0	1	....	....	....
Rangpur	22.8	66.6	....	....	....	....	....
Bogra	12.01	2.14	84-0-0	1	....	....	....
Sherpur	5.6	1.1	128-0-0	1	60-0-0	20-0-0	....
Pabna	....	....	....	....	....	....	....
Sirajganj	....	....	....	....	....	....	....
Old Malda	2.8	6	193-0-0	2	....	....	....

Source: Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, Education (A) Proceedings for the month of January 1912, File No. E/25-E, Nos. 53-56, Assam Secretariat (Sylhet Proceedings), National Archives, Bangladesh, Serial 75, Bundle 3, List 4.

Table 5.4: Statistics showing the amount spent on female education by District Boards.

Names of Districts	Percentage of funds spent on education, 1909-1910	Percentage spent on female education	Amount in figures spent on female education	Number of girls' schools receiving aid	Amount spent on buildings for girls' schools	Amount spent on furniture for girls' schools	Amount spent on scholarships for girls' schools
Dhaka Division			Rs.—a.- p.		Rs.—a.- p.	Rs.—a.- p.	Rs.—a.-p.
Dhaka	33.3	6.8	16,660-0-0	496	....	10-0-0	112-0-0
Mymensingh	23.2	3.7	17,677-0-0	564	Rs. 4 to 7	Rs. 4 to 7	284-0-0
Faridpur	49.4	5.6	1,118-0-0	117	....	....	....
Barisal	23.21	2.24	756-0-0	379	....	....	204-0-0
Chittagong Division							
Chittagong	25	7.4	964-0-0	...	250-0-0	....	24-0-0
Comilla	39.8	4.33	10,563-0-0	476	...	....	144-0-0
Noakhali	31	17.5	13,338-0-0	278	2,615-0-0	500-0-0	280-0-0
Rajshahi Division							
Rajshahi	28.22	2.26	5,388-15-0	99	....	....	44-8-10
Dinajpur	12.6	8	1,931-0-0	31	500-0-0	....	23-10-10
Jalpaiguri	32.6	4.1	1,361-0-0	512	200-0-0	12-0-0	24-0-0
Rangpur	22.8	66.6	8,419-0-0	....	....	30-0-0	125-0-0
Bogra	33.95	21.1	9,386-0-0	228	210-0-0	....	...
Pabna	53	3.6	5,148-0-0	125	....	....	192-0-0
Malda	53.2	6.7	1,163-0-0	....	200-0-0	....	132-0-0
Surma Valley Division							
Silchar	31	1.77	431-0-0	6	....	....	....
Hailakandi	37.5	4.4	2,350-0-0	9	900-0-0	4-0-0	....
North Sylhet	41.5	3.1	....	16	....	....	....
Karimganj	31.9	2.04	2,004-0-0	16	....	....	....
South Sylhet	39.7	3.9	1,430-0-0	10	....	10-0-0	63-0-0
Habiganj	20.84	7.25	1,070-0-0	20	10-0-0	36-0-0	....
Sunamganj	45.3	3.4	2,735-0-0	21	375-0-0	165-0-0	36-0-0

The figures shown above account for three High Schools, two Middle English Schools, twelve Middle Vernacular schools, sixty-six Upper Primary and 2,488 Lower Primary girls' schools in Eastern Bengal that existed at the time of the count.[32] It becomes difficult to assess income and expenditure for Eastern Bengal separately after the partition of 1905 was annulled in 1911 and the Female Education Committee which had compiled all the data, was dissolved. Separate statistics become scarce and fragmentary. Table 5.5 presents at a glance what the sources of income for female education were, what amount was disbursed for female education and its proportion to total expenditure at the time Bengal became united again:

Table 5.5: Sources of income and net expenditure from those sources in 1911-12.

Sources from which expenditure on education is met	Net amount disbursed for female education	Proportion to total cost
Provincial Revenues	Rs. 83,141	30.2%
District or Local Funds	Rs. 1,12,726	14.4%
Municipal Funds	Rs. 9,672	0.5%
Fees	Rs. 10,337	42.5%
All Other Sources	Rs. 33,197	12.4%

Source: Compiled from the 'report on the Progress of Education in Eastern Bengal & Assam during the years 1907-08 to 1911-12,' vol. II, Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, 1913, Appendix Table XIX & XXI.

[32] Assam Secretariat, Sylhet (A) Proceedings, Education Department, February 1908, Nos. 44-47, NA,B.

The proportion of income to expenditure was such that development work always had to take a back seat, for keeping the institution floating became the main concern of the local management committees. The low provisions earmarked for primary education by Municipalities and District Boards was the greatest weakness in the system. The dismal situation of the poor infrastructural facilities prompted the Director of Public Instruction to comment apologetically that: "...The public provision of education all the world over is a matter of funds, a question involving all sorts of delicate adjustment between what the individual can reasonably claim and the State can justly give."[33] What the State could 'justly give', however, was a sound system of education administration.

Education Administration:

The establishment of the Department of Education in 1855 was the first step towards streamlining the administration and financing the type of education the Government had opted for after completely overhauling the indigenous form of education in Bengal. An Education Service cadre was formed that needed qualified personnel to function properly. By 1864 the Director of Public Instruction felt the ardent need to attract to the Education Service men of ability. To attract such men, there arose a need to create a work environment with future prospects of rising high in the administrative hierarchy. Among the three presidencies of Madras, Bombay and Calcutta, the latter could boast of having the most advanced state of education compared to the rest of India. Consequently, it was in the interests of the Bengal Government that it secure competent teachers, administrators and inspectors --- persons to discharge the duties of the higher posts in the education service. The Government of India, in Despatch No. 13 dated 3rd June, 1864, presented the classification of educational officers formulated with the help of the DPI of Bengal. The classification was to take effect from July, 1865.[34] The classification of Education Officers ranged from Class I to IV. One Director of Public Instruction, one Principal and one First Inspector would form Class I. Class II officers

[33] *Progress of Education in Bengal, 1912-13 to 1916-17*, Fifth Quinquennial Review, by W.W. Hornell, C.I.E. (Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, 1918), p. 102.
[34] Government of Bengal, Home Department, Education Proceedings, July 1865, No. 28, National Archives, Bangladesh.

would consist of two Inspectors, two Principals of colleges and two Professors of universities. There would be ten Class III officers comprising of two Inspectors, three college Principals and five university Professors. Class IV officers would include four Professors, five Assistant Professors and two Supernumerary Assistant Professors, totaling eleven in number. In May, 1869, a reorganization of the Education Department brought some changes in the third and fourth classes of officers, keeping the first and second classes intact. The number of Class III officers was reduced from ten to nine and the number of Class IV officers was increased to twenty. Class III officers now comprised of two Inspectors, three Principals and four Professors while Class IV comprised of ten Professors, nine Assistant Professors and one Additional Inspector. The Education Department thus comprised of the Director and thirty-seven classified officers, all of whom were Englishmen. Local governments made several proposals to incorporate Indian officials into the classified hierarchy at that time, but each proposal was rejected by the Government.[35]

Education administration took up the major share of revenue allocation for the sector. Government control over education was enforced through a strict education administration. Inspection of institutions on a regular basis saw to it that government approved curriculum was being followed in schools and government regulations is being abided by school management committees. Proper inspection was thus an indispensable charge on revenue allocation for education. Inspection of schools was a part of the education administration that the Hunter Commission laid great stress on. But when it came to female education, the slack attitude of the administrators was evident in many instances. More often than not, the convenience of the inspectors turned out to be more important than the students. Madhu Kishwar cites an instance where the inspector of the Lahore circle complained about the fact that the sparsely located girls' schools made inspection a lengthier process than inspecting boys' schools. Apparently, his wife, the Inspectress, was detained for longer periods than himself and that caused great inconvenience. The Director of Public Instruction, in this instance, ruled that it would be sufficient for the Inspectress to remain in the District long enough to enable the Assistant

[35] Education Consultations, A Proceedings, July 1878 to July 1879, National Archives, Bangladesh.

Inspector to examine the boys' schools.[36] This was the extent to which female education took back-stage.

By the time the Education Resolution of 1913 was passed, the number of public institutions for girls in the primary, secondary and special schools category in the whole province of Bengal had increased from 7,263 in the preceding year to 7,573.[37] We seldom get separate statistics for the girls of Eastern Bengal from here on. The number of girls, including those reading in mixed schools for boys and girls had increased from 222,749 to 230, 729.[38] Evidently, till the second half of the nineteenth century, the largest number of girls reading in boys' schools was returned from the 24-Pargannahs, while Khulna and Jessore of Eastern Bengal stood second and third respectively.[39] The number of secondary schools increased from 54 to 60; primary schools from 6,779 to 7,031 and special schools increased from 427 to 477.[40] The most notable development in 1913 from the preceding year was the increase of the number of Muslim girls in schools to 6,013 from 1,423. This increased number might have been the result of the addition of numbers from Eastern Bengal after the annulment of the Partition which took effect from 1912. In the following year, in 1914, the total number of girls in schools rose to 129,518.[41] Miss Brock, the Inspectress of Schools, in her report on Eastern Bengal mentions that the improvement in the conditions of schools for Muslim girls and the interest that had been newly generated among the Muslim community about the education of their girls was the most encouraging feature of her work for the year 1913-14.[42] Yet, despite all the encouraging signs, according to the census of 1921, the year at which this study ends, 5 out of 6 girls of the school-going age had not yet been drawn into schools and only 1.54 percent of the total female population were under any kind of instruction.[43] The following

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[36] Sumit Sarkar and Tanika Sarkar (eds.), *Women and Social Reform in Modern India: A Reader*, vol. 1 (New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2007) p. 309.
[37] 'Report on Public Instruction in Bengal for the year 1913-14, Bengal Education Proceedings (A) for January1915, File 8-R/7/1-4, Nos. 13-17, Chapter VIII, p. 13. NA, B.
[38] *Ibid.*
[39] *Public Instruction in Bengal for 1883-84* (Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, 1884), p. 124.
[40] *Ibid.*
[41] *Ibid.*
[42] *Ibid.*, p. 15.
[43] *Eighth Quinquennial Review on the Progress of Education in Bengal for the years 1927-28 to 1931-32* by Rai Sahib Monoranjan Mitra and K. Zacharia (Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, 1933).

tables (Tables 5.6 and 5.7) provide some statistical data taken from 1901 to 1912 showing the increase and/or decrease of pupils in proportion to the total population of the school-going age in Eastern Bengal. The statistics of Table 5.6 takes into account the number of girls studying in boys' schools along with the proportion of the number of girls of the school-going age that are actually in schools. Girls in boys' school did not indicate a co-educational system. The teachers in the boys' schools that admitted girls worked double shifts to accommodate the girls in a separate shift from boys. The tables are provided in page 193.

Table 5.6 : Girls in Boys' School and their Proportion to the Total School-Going Age.

Year	In Public Institutions for Girls			In Public Institutions for Boys		Total girls in public institu-tions	Total girls in private institu-tions	Total girls under instruction	Percentag e of school-going age
	Total pupils	Boys	Girls	Girls	Percentage of total girls				
1911-1912	105,219	1,856	103,363	23,896	18.7	127,259	7,895	135,154	6.6
1906-1907	47,756	692	47,064	14,903	24.0	61,967	8,353	70,320	3.6
Percentage of increase or decrease	120.3	168.3	119.6	60.3	....	105.3	-5.4	92.1	....

Source: Compiled from the Report on the Progress of Education in Eastern Bengal and Assam during the years 1907-08 to 1911-12, Vol. II, Appendix Table XCVIII. Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, 1913.

Table 5.7 : Proportion of Girls in Schools to the Total Female Population of a School-Going Age in Eastern Bengal.

1901-1902		1906-1907		1911-1912	
Total	Percentage of school-going age	Total	Percentage of school-going age	Total	Percentage of school-going age
32,753	1.7	61,967	3.3	127,259	6.3

Source: Compiled from the Report on the Progress of Education in Eastern Bengal and Assam during the years 1907-08 to 1911-12, vol. II, Appendix Table XCVII.

Due to the increase in the number of schools and students, it became imperative to increase the number of female inspecting staff, a task that was long overdue. The Education Policy of 1904 had made provisions to appoint 5 Assistant Inspectresses and an additional Inspectress. Taking advantage of the imperial allotment for female education in 1913, the number of Assistant Inspectresses was increased from 5 to 10 to assist the two Inspectresses Miss Brock and Miss Garret. The Assistant Inspectresses were not entitled to visit high schools but were responsible for the inspection of primary and middle schools and visit homes to inspect and report on zenana classes. They were required to tour for 150 days during the year and submit monthly tour diaries to the Inspectress with note on the schools they visited.[44] In addition to inspecting the condition of the school and the attainments of the pupils, they were to assess how the staff were treating the subjects of the curriculum, especially needlework, handwork and domestic sciences.[45] The Inspectress could delegate to her Assistant, the duties of streamlining the administration and management of the schools and classes under her charge and the conduct of scholarships and examinations. An Assistant Inspectress could not "sanction, suspend, withdraw, enhance or reduce any grant made by the Department."[46] She could, however, recommend to the Inspectress the withdrawal of grant-in-aid if the authorities of the inspected institution showed unwillingness or unwarrantable delay to implement her recommendations for improvement. The Assistant Inspectress had the power to withdraw recognition from aided primary and middle schools if they failed to satisfy Departmental requirements. She also had the power to grant or refuse recognition to unaided girls' schools under her charge.

Teachers' Training:

In April of 1863, the Dacca Female Normal School was opened for the training of native school mistresses with a provisional grant of Rs. 150 per month from the Government for

[44] 'Rules regulating the functions of Assistant Inspectresses of Schools in Eastern Bengal and Assam,' Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, Education Department Proceedings (A) for the month of June 1911, File No. E-309 E, Nos. 28-30. NA, B.
[45] *Ibid.*, Rule No. 4.
[46] *Ibid.*, Rule No. 6.

expenses as an experimental measure for one year. It was the only one of its kind in Bengal, perhaps in India, at that time. In three years' time, in 1866, the officiating Director of Public Instruction H. Woodrow was writing to Ashley Eden, then the Secretary to the Government of Bengal, that the school had succeeded well and that it promised to be very useful. As such, the provisional grant of Rs. 150 per month was confirmed by the Lieutenant-Governor in 1866 for two more years.[47] Mr. Clarke, the then Inspector of Schools, South-East Division, under whose jurisdiction the supervision of the Dacca Female Normal School was, gives an extensive report[48] about the staff of teachers, the number of students, the course of instruction and other relevant information about the school to the Madras Government to replicate such an institution there, some of which are detailed below.

The Dacca Female Normal School was staffed by three teachers: Mohesh Chandra Ganguli, the Head Master, a Brahmin, twenty-five years of age, working on a salary of 30 rupees per month; Mistress Fanny, a native Christian, aged forty and married, working for 25 rupees a month and Mistress Radhamoni Debi, a widowed Brahmin lady aged sixty, working for a salary of 10 rupees a month. The number of students, in 1866, was twenty-three, their ages varying from 18 to 32. Of the twenty-three students, twelve were native Christians, of whom nine were married and three were widows. Two of the students were Khatriya widows. The rest of the nine students were Bairaginees (spelt Byraginee in C.B. Clarke's document), four of whom were married and five widowed. These Bairaginee women were not of the class who lived in *Ahkharas*, but considered to be good Hindus, although they did not belong to any conventional caste. They followed the doctrine of Sree Chaitanya and were found living in almost every town and village. They were infinitely less prejudiced than other Hindus and allowed widow remarriage. In the opinion of native departmental officers, the Bairaginees were respectable members of Hindu society and those native gentlemen who

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[47] '*Extract from the Proceedings of the Government of India, in the Financial Department, No. 1193, under date the 12th March, 1866*,' General Department, Education (A) Proceedings for December, 1867, No. 36, NA, B.

[48] From C.B. Clarke, Esq., Inspector of Schools, South-East Division, to the Director of Public Instruction, No. 2809, dated Dacca, the 20th November, 1867, GOB, General Department, Education (A) Proceedings for December 1867, Nos. 34-35, NA, B.

were enlightened enough to desire governesses for their female wards never objected to taking this class of Bairaginee into their houses. Society had an unfavorable opinion of the other class of Bairagi and Bairaginee who lived in *Ahkharas* and took up begging for a living.

Of the twenty-three students, five received stipends of 4 rupees each; eight students received stipends of 3 rupees each; eight students received stipends of 2 rupees each, and, two studied there free of cost. In fact, the Normal School did not take any fees from the trainees during the whole three year course. It was totally dependent on government funding. Boarding was not provided for any of the students. A Normal School housed a Practicing School in the ground floor of same building where seventy-two girls were enrolled as of 1866.[49] There were many more applicants for stipends. As C.B. Clarke says, had there been twice as many stipends available, they would all be filled up. It was ironic, however, that when C.B. Clarke became the Director of Public Instruction, under his watch, the Dacca Female Normal School closed down citing unavailability of adequate number of students as the cause. The Inspectors and Inspectresses of schools always deeply regretted that the scarcity of trained teachers was one of the major causes of the backwardness of women's education in Bengal. It would not be before 1907 that a training school would be attached to the Eden Female School in Dacca. This famous school, the only Government school in Eastern Bengal, was, at one point, under the threat of closure within a decade after it was founded. To clarify the matter further, we present here the full excerpt from the *General Report on Public Instruction in Bengal for 1883-84*:

> "The Eden Girls' School at Dacca had 157 pupils, against 191 of the preceding year. The school cost Rs. 5,880, of which Government contributed Rs. 4,910 and Rs. 970 were raised from private sources, chiefly subscriptions. The Inspector thinks that the time has arrived for levying higher rates of schooling fees, so as to meet a substantial share of the expenditure. The commissioner also is of opinion that the school "has been quite long enough supported by private subscriptions, and it is high time to see if the school is a *real* want; if it is, the parents of girls will readily pay the small fees demanded; if not, the sooner the school is closed the better, and the public money

[49] Ibid .

expended on it devoted to some other purpose." Three girls from the school passed at the upper and four at the lower primary scholarship examination. There were no candidates at the middle examinations. Two or three girls are preparing for the ensuing Entrance examination; but when these girls leave school, it is doubtful whether the Entrance class will be kept up." [50]

The same report showed that the numerical strength of Bethune School of Calcutta, the only other Government school, was 112, 45 students less than that of the Eden Female School of Dhaka. The expenditure of the school department of Bethune School was Rs. 15, 470, of which Government contributed Rs. 11,920, almost three times that of Eden. One girl appeared at the Entrance examination, but failed to pass. At the middle scholarship examination two out of five girls passed in the second division. Although statistically speaking the Bethune School did not prove to be way ahead of the Eden Female School of Eastern Bengal, there was no talk of closing that institution.

Against all odds, the Eden Female School survived and went into the twentieth century as the only government girls' school of Eastern Bengal. It became quite apparent at the advent of the new century that secondary institutions for girls would come into existence within the next decade. But were there teachers to provide for that necessity? The urgency of the demand prompted a review of the whole issue of spending to ensure quality along with quantity. Before training classes were attached to Bethune and Eden, it was solely the Christian missions who trained teachers. The grant-in-aid the missions received was enhanced because they were providing that service but the problem was that their aim was to supply Christian teachers for mission schools whereas Hindu and Muslim female teachers were a necessity to overcome the lack of qualified personnel in girls' schools. The declaration of the establishment of a university in Dacca after the Partition of Bengal was annulled (1911) was accompanied by the promise of a women's college in connection with the university. In 1921, the same year as the University of Dhaka began its journey, the history of female education in Eastern Bengal took a turn towards the tertiary level with the beginning of collegiate education at Eden.

[50] *General Report on Public Instruction in Bengal, for 1883-84* (Calcutta: Printed at the Bengal Secretariat, 1884), p. 120, paragraph 332.

Salary of Teachers:

With the removal of a lot of the social barriers to women's education, the demand for female teachers was constantly on the increase. Unfortunately, however, the unattractive salaries of teachers in general and female teachers in particular kept the prospects of attracting desirable candidates to this profession quite low. In pre-colonial times, there was no public provision for the salaries for the *pundit*s of the *pathshala*s and *tol*s or the *maulvi*s of the *madrassah*s and *maktab*s. They were entirely dependent on their benefactor's benevolence for their subsistence.[51] There were some scholars who paid fees in cash, while others paid in kind and yet others who could not pay at all. The new educational system abolished traditional methods of payment in kind and established the system of a fixed monthly salary for teachers and made the payment of fees compulsory for students. Teachers' income, however, remained as unattractive as before. The analysis of the *Cambridge History of India* regarding the defects of the education system in general, is especially applicable to female education. According to the authors, "It is not difficult to find the fundamental defects from which modern Indian education has suffered. Government has almost always pursued the idle hope of producing a good system with cheap and often inefficient instruments...In founding a new educational system the provision of teachers should have been the first consideration. Normal schools should have engaged the closest attention of government. Suitable men should have been attracted by good prospects of pay and promotion...Educational salaries were kept low in order to make education cheap."[52]

By the second decade of the 20th century official rhetoric shifted from reporting on the social impediments to education to the poignant issue of teachers' pay. "The chief needs at present are the provision of adequate rates of pay for teachers, facilities for training them, the strengthening of the female inspecting agency and the improvement of the schools themselves...Many schools are unable to maintain whole-time teachers; in others the salaries of teachers are so inadequate that the profession offers little attraction"

[51] See Kazi Shahidullah, *Patshalas into Schools*, pp. 11-12.
[52] See Allan, J., Sir T. Wolseley Haig, H.H. Dodwell and V.D. Mahajan, *The Cambridge Shorter History of India* (New Delhi: S. Chand & Co., 1969), p. 849.

says the report on public instruction in Bengal for 1917-18.[53] Improvement in teaching capacity needed training and few teachers would undergo training unless they were assured of an adequate pay. The local bodies responsible for education funding, with inelastic incomes and growing demands on their resources, had very limited means to provide proper infrastructure like buildings and accommodation facilities for teachers and pupils and even less financial incentive to do so. Society was yet to put an economic value on female education. Discrimination was practiced in the pay structure of female and male teachers. In 1921 the Bengal Education Service was reorganized and two separate cadres on different rates of pay were constituted for male and female teachers. The minimum wage for a female officer of the Bengal Education Service was fixed at Rs. 200 per month, while the maximum range was fixed at Rs. 500 a month.[54] In contrast, the minimum and maximum for male officers of the BES was fixed at Rs. 250 and Rs. 800 per month respectively. Teachers outside the government service drew salaries from a range of Rs. 12 to Rs. 180 a month.

Financing Zenana Education:

Zenana education had received the required recognition and the desired financial support in the Indian Education Commission report of 1882. Government encouragement for this mode of education became more pronounced in the Indian Education Policy of 1904. Zenana education was spoken about as having rendered great assistance to the cause of female education and more encouragement through increased grants-in-aid was promised. The Director of Public Instruction Mr. H. Sharp made an estimate of Rs. 10,000 a year for zenana education, which, in his report, he refers to as 'home' education.[55] Of that Rs. 10,000, Rs. 4,100 was allocated for Dacca, Rs. 1,800 for Bogra and Rs. 1,710 for Comilla

[53] *Report on Public Instruction in Bengal for 1917-18*, GOB, General Dept., Education Branch, Calcutta, the 10th March, 1919, Resolution No. 426 Edn., p. 3.
[54] W.C. Wordsworth, *Report on Public Instruction in Bengal for 1920-21* (Calcutta: The Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, 1922), p. 3.
[55] Assam Secretariat (Sylhet Proceedings), Bengal Education (A) Proceedings, January 1910, File No. E-203-E. of 1909, NAL,B.

and Noakhali combined.[56] The remaining amount of Rs. 2,390 was available for further expansion of the system during the fiscal year 1911-12. It was resolved that the amount could be spent to extend zenana education in Chittagong, Jalpaiguri and Sylhet. The Female Education Committee kept recommending that affluent gentlemen of Dacca contribute to the cause of zenana education by coming up with financial support so that more centers could be developed in other towns.

The Director of Public Instruction's report on female education in Eastern Bengal in 1910 shows that each governess received a salary of 50 rupees a month and out of that she had to provide herself with a maid to accompany her on her visits. It was not respectable for a woman to travel alone. Conveyance cost of Rs. 25 was allotted to each governess in Dhaka. However, where two visitations a day were required, the sum was not enough.[57] After the Partition of Bengal was annulled in 1911, there was a redistribution of the imperial allotment for elementary female education. The total amount of grants-in-aid allotted for zenana education was Rs. 8,400.[58] Out of that amount, Rs. 5,400 was allotted to West Bengal. Eastern Bengal received an allocation of Rs. 3,000. The money grant-in-aid for West Bengal was to be used to employ fifteen additional zenana teachers at Rs. 30 per month each. Eastern Bengal, on the other hand, was lobbying for the extension of the government zenana system to Faridpur and Mymensingh. The approved grant of 3,000 was to be used for that purpose. The scheme for Faridpur and Mymensingh would incur the recurring cost of Rs. 1,200 a year for two governesses at Rs. 50 per month each; Rs. 480 a year for conveyance charges at the two centers at Rs. 20 a month for each center, and, Rs. 200 a year for contingency expenses of two centers at Rs. 100 per annum per center.[59]

Attempts for the amelioration of the conditions of the zenana governesses drew considerable attention in official circles. Along with zenana governesses, there emerged another classification of peripatetic teachers who taught needle-work to the inmates of the

[56] Assam Secretariat (Sylhet Proceedings), Bengal Education (A) Proceedings, January 1912, File No. E-25-E, Nos. 53-56, NAL, B.
[57] Assam Secretariat (Sylhet Proceedings), Bengal Education (A) Proceedings, April 1910, File No. E-946 of 1909, Nos. 1-8, NAL,B.
[58] Government of Bengal, General Department, Education Branch (A) Proceedings, File No. I-E/2, November, 1913, Nos. 8-13, NAL, B.
[59] Ibid.

zenana. Needle-work was immensely popular in Eastern Bengal. The official count put the number of peripatetic needle-work teachers as by 1915 they, as well as peripatetic zenana governesses were being considered as 'officers' of the Education Service.[60] Along with the mistresses and members of the Inspecting Staff for girls' schools, government extended the rules of the Civil Service Regulations to give maternity leave and also the opportunity to draw a minimum of Rs. 30 to a maximum of Rs. 50 per month as conveyance allowance to the peripatetic governesses and needle-work teachers.[61]

After the zenana education system was abolished in 1933, the savings due to the abolition of the fourteen permanent posts of zenana governesses in Eastern Bengal was calculated by the Education Department as Rs. 12,600 yearly.[62] It was decided that this sum would be redirected for the improvement of the education of Muslim girls. After long deliberations, the Retrenchment Committee, which was set up to propose ways to spend the money, decided that: (i) Rs. 2,400 would go to recurring grants to female madrassahs; (ii) Rs. 4,080 would go as direct recurring grants to non-Government secondary schools; (iii) Stipends worth Rs. 1,320 would be created to be tenable at the Junior Madrassahs; (iv) Scholarships worth Rs. 2,760 would be created to be tenable at non-Government secondary schools, and, (v) Rs. 2,040 would be spent to create scholarships to be tenable in Arts Colleges.[63] Thus, after running for almost a hundred years, the zenana education system came to a slow end. However, even after the scheme was abandoned officially, unofficially home education continued, albeit in an informal manner, as it was a tradition that had its genesis in the ancient times.

As a final word, we can comment from the evidence gathered that local initiative played a very significant part in the spread of female education in Bengal contrary to the popular belief that it was the colonial Government that had been the major player in that field. By the first quarter of the twentieth century the purdah system became less strict.

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[60] 'Amelioration of the conditions of service in the case of school mistresses and members of the Inspecting Staff for girls' schools, GOB, General Dept. Education Branch (A) Proceedings for the month of February 1915, File 3-1/14, Nos. 51-59, NA,B.
[61] Ibid., p. 6.
[62] 'Schemes for utilizing the money saved by the abolition of zenana classes', GOB, Education Department Proceedings (B) for the month of July, 1934, File 1E/17, Nos. 186 & 187. NA, B.
[63] *Ibid.*

The age of marriage had been raised by legislation. It had considerable impact in restricting the removal of girls from schools at an early age. The relapse into ignorance was reduced by a prolonged stay at school. The indifference of parents to send their daughters to school was not so apparent in the urban population. The development of the phenomenon of mass education, however, remained to be achieved till the second half of the twentieth century. Nevertheless, it is fair to say that by the first half of the century a daughter's education had come to be recognized as much a part of a guardian's duty as the education of the son's. In fact, patriarchal society came to realize, to quote from the DPI's report for the quinquennium 1907-08 to 1911-12 that, "education need not make their girls more independent of the lawful guardians or less observant of established customs and domestic duties...Indeed so great has the improvement been in this respect, that the absence of an adequate supply of women teachers and the want of funds are now more potent obstacles to the advancement education than the social customs and prejudices of the people."[64]

By the end of the colonial period, pedagogic ideology had been radically transformed from its traditional position in the social order. From a private enterprise it became the responsibility of the Government. Formal schooling had acquired a new importance. Schools turned into formal institutions with full-time teachers where the primary target was pedagogy whereas teaching in the traditional madrassah or the pathshala was a part-time job of the maulvi of a mosque or the village pundit. In the process, the family's role as the primary agency of cultural transfer was reduced and partly superseded.[65]

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[64] Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, Department of Education (A) Proceedings, *Report on the Progress of Education in Eastern Bengal and Assam During the Years 1907-1908 to 1911-1912*, vol. 1 (Calcutta: The Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, 1913), p. 92, The University of Dhaka Library.

[65] See Bailyn, Bernard, *Education in the Forming of American Society: Needs and Opportunities for Study* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1972), p. 22.

Conclusion

The late nineteenth century and the early twentieth century were, by all considerations, a period of phenomenal socio-cultural advancement in colonial India. Major paradigm shifts occurred in the discourses of patriarchal dominance over the domestic space and the requirements of strict purdah in this period. The New Woman who emerged as a social entity in the second half of the nineteenth century, celebrated by social historians, came of age by the first half of the twentieth.[1] These women were forming organizations that pressed for the participation of women in politics and created a pressure group for more meaningful reforms related to their status and education.[2] The concept of the construction of a childhood for girls (and also for boys) manifested itself through the discourse on child marriage and was formally embodied through the Child Marriage Restraint Act, popularly known as the Sarda Act, of 1929. This fixed the minimum age of marriage at fourteen for girls and eighteen for boys. The passing of the Act was more significant because the women's organizations that had begun to form in the first half of the 20th century played a major role in lobbying for its passage through Legislature. Education was the catalyst from which all these activities stemmed.

However, within official circles and without, it was felt that the cause of female education should have elicited more sincere efforts for its progress in the truest sense. The Director of Public Instruction, Sir Alexander Pedlar (DPI from 1899 to 1903), who presided over the advent of a new century and new hopes, on the basis of the report of the last quinquennial period (1897-98 to 1901-02) of the nineteenth century made a precise articulation of the condition regarding female education:

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[1] See Murshid, *Reluctant Debutante* (1983); Borthwick, *The Changing Role of Women* (1984), and Amin, *The World of Muslim Women* (1996).

[2] The Bangiya Nari Samaj campaigned for the vote for women, the Bengal Women's Education League (which became the All-India Women's Conference) lobbied for the inclusion of girls in universal education schemes, and the All-Bengal Women's Union Pressed for measures to protect prostitutes from being exploited. Although all of these were Calcutta-based organizations, they had considerable impact on the psychic mobility of the intelligentsia of Eastern Bengal. For details see Southard, Barbara, *The Women's Movement and Colonial Politics in Bengal: The Quest for Political Rights, Education and Social Reform Legislation, 1921-1936* (Dhaka: University Press Limited, 1996).

> "the chief causes for the slow progress of this branch of education in this country are:- (1) The conservatism of a great portion of the people: (2) the fact that the education of their female children is a matter of great indifference to a large proportion of parents and guardians, as they usually do not take the same amount of care and interest in the education of their female wards as they do in that of boys: (3) the system of early marriage which presents an almost insurmountable barrier to education beyond the primary stages; (4) the want of educated female teachers; (5) the want of a system for educating zenana ladies; and (6) the want of adequate State aid and aid from other public funds."[3]

The official assessment mentioned above corroborates Raana Haider's research findings where she states, in a nutshell, that tradition and attitude, finance and infrastructural factors are the three reasons why daughters are not sent to school and why the dropout rate is higher in girls than in boys.[4]

The year 1882 was a turning point in the history of the development of modern education in India in general and Bengal in particular. The modest pace at which mission schools, zenana classes and private schools were making progress in the field of women's education got an instant boost from the grant-in-aid scheme. Capital input in the education sector was inspired by the colonial administrative philosophy of indirect rule where the metropolis gave the colonial subjects some semblance of self-rule. To implement the philosophy of indirect rule, government needed an educated class of bureaucrats. This educated middle class in turn encouraged their wives and daughters to get educated. The first generation of educated girls from middle class families ensured that their female offspring carry the torch and take further steps to attain higher level education. By 1921, with the opening of a collegiate section in the Eden Female Girls' School, the only Government-managed English High School in Eastern Bengal, and the acceptance of women in the newly opened University of Dacca in the same year, the lack of access to women's tertiary education in this region was finally removed.

The official declaration of the end of the zenana education system in 1933 heralded a major break with past traditions. The tradition of giving girls religious lessons at home through peripatetic teachers (called *ustadni* in the vernacular) was a practice in almost all homes of the

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[3] 'Report on Public Instruction in Bengal for the year 1905-6,' Government of Bengal, Education (A) Proceedings for the month of January 1906, File 8-R/ 5, Nos. 138-142, p. 34. NA, B.

[4] Haider, Raana, *A Perspective in Development: Gender Focus* (Dhaka: University Press Limited, 1995), p. 118.

upper and middle classes. Upper class girls also acquired some reading, writing and rudimentary accounting skills at home to prepare them for their future role of running large house-holds. The arrival of a large number of white missionary women in the second half of the nineteenth century coincided with the well-to-do families' demand for English education. The missionaries had not, of course, come to India to impart secular education. But their eagerness to influence the women of the upper classes and through them facilitate proselytization among the future generations led the Christian missionaries to offer their services as educators. Through the Indian Education Policy of 1904 the Government stepped in to give more structural organization to this system. Known as the Central Gathering System, the peripatetic form was replaced with an institutional form whereby an owner of a house offered his premises for the use of zenana teachers to come and teach a group of zenana pupils gathered there. This practice had gained popularity in Eastern Bengal whereby women and girls of all ages met together to study in exchange of a fee. Centers for zenana education were opened in the various districts of Noakhali, Faridpur, Jessore, Rajshahi, Jalpaiguri, Barisal, Sylhet and Chittagong which were equally aided as the centers of Dacca through the grant-in-aid system. Ultimately, however popular it may have been, the whole zenana education system came to be regarded as prohibitively expensive when more and more families started to send their female wards to formal schools. In addition to that, to counter the proselytizing activity of the Christian missionaries in the *andarmahal*, local zenana agencies like the Hitakari Sabha, the Faridpur Suhrid Sabha, Musalman Suhrid Sammilani and the Dacca Antahpur Stree Shiksha Sabha were founded by educated gentlemen. They provided tuition, drew up syllabi, wrote primers for distribution in the zenana and took examinations.[5] None of these local voluntary organizations lasted long. But they made an impact on official policy-making by moving Government to appoint, on Government salary, Muslim and Hindu peripatetic governesses to pacify strong anti-Christian sentiments that had grown stronger by the second half of the nineteenth century.

By the second decade of the twentieth century single white British and North American women no longer flocked to join the Churches as missionaries because by then the environment for work had been created in their own respective countries. So there was a dearth of teachers as well. The acute disappointment felt by the Christian Churches at the unsatisfactory rate of

[5] Booklists, examinations dates and names of the benefactors who offered to give prizes to successful candidates were published in *Dacca Prokash*, the weekly paper published from Dacca. See *Dacca Prokash,* July 24, 1870.

conversion caused the Church to divert their resources from India to Africa where conversion practices yielded better results.[6] Thus the official declaration of the end of the zenana system in 1933 only formalized what had gradually started to decline by the first decade of the twentieth century and had effectively become defunct by the first quarter.

What essentially happened during the course of the period under study was that, the whole system of the indigenous type of education was redesigned to institute on the ruins of the old, a new and modern system. Changes were wrought in both the physical environment of education and in the psychological impact education was supposed to have on children. From the thatched houses adjacent to the local mosque or temple that was the madrassah/maktab or the pathshala, brick buildings were built as schools. Instead of sitting on the bare floor or on straw mats on the floor, children sat on benches and the teacher sat on a chair, behind a table. Blackboards and chalks came to be used. Books and workbooks replaced the slate. A routine was established. Punctuality was inculcated. Compulsory attendance was imposed. All these developments meant a significant break from past tradition. The introduction of examinations, certificates and scholarships created a sense of purpose for the content of education. The scholars' psyche changed as less priority was placed on religion, and more stress given to history, geography, hygiene, arithmetic domestic economy, the keeping of accounts and other forms of abstract knowledge. As Bertrand Russell pointed out[7], imposing the new system may be counted amongst the negative consequence of modern education, but a civilized society seems unable to without these.[8]

Through the teaching of domestic skills as part of the school curriculum for girls, the idea of the essential femininity of the Bengali woman was preserved. It proffered a workable solution to patriarchal society's fears that western education would make a girl indolent, aggressive, unfeminine, amorous and generally unfit to fulfill her chief function in life which was to be a home-maker. The subject of hygiene, however, was an important part of the curriculum of both

[6] See Ruth Compton Brouwer, *New Women for God: Canadian Presbyterian Women and India Missions, 1876-1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), p.171.
[7] Russell, Bertrand, *Education and the Social Order* (London: Routledge, reprinted in 1999), first published in Great Britain in 1932 by George Allen & Unwin.
[8] *Ibid.*, p. 29.

boys and girls.[9] The importance on hygiene in the school curriculum was an offshoot of the discourse on public health that had developed throughout the nineteenth century in India to win the battle against epidemic diseases.[10]

Regarding school primers, the previous practice was to choose from books written by private authors. It was the prerogative of the school management committees to do so. By 1900 and 1901 Government began to feel that some control should be exercised as to the content of education through the preparation of books by Govt. education officials but was somewhat uncertain. By the end of 1904, when the Indian Education Policy was formulated, Government had declared the policy of preparing model books by an agency appointed by Government. There was public outcry against it, private authors resented Govt. intervention in their business, so a decision had to be made to phase out the previous primers in three years' time and implement the Government approved list of primers.

As the nineteenth century drew to an end and the twentieth century unfolded, it was time for assessment of the achievements and failures of the past century. The *General Report on Public Instruction for 1899-1900* sounded particularly pessimistic. It reported that female education had progressed neither in quantity, nor in quality and that it had not received the encouragement it deserved either from Government or from the people.[11] The report continued to state that it had become "urgently necessary" to devise some kind of scheme for the promotion of female education. About the condition of female education in Bengal in 1900, the *General Report on Public Instruction* says that:

> "The condition of that branch of education is now what the condition of English education in this country was 50 or 60 years ago and if female education were to receive the support and encouragement that English education had at that time it would be in a much more prosperous condition than at present. The grant-in-aid system under which alone Government grant is available is wholly unsuited to girls' schools. There

[9] Shahidullah, Kazi, *Patshalas into Schools: The Development of Indigenous Elementary Education in Bengal, 1854-1905*, (Calcutta: Firma KLM Private Limited, 1987), Appendix, p. 216.
[10] See Arnold, David, *Colonizing the Body: State Medicine and Epidemic Disease in Nineteenth Century India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).
[11] Government of Bengal, General Department, Education Branch, General Report on Public Instruction for 1899-1900, File 8-R/4/1-5, Proceedings No. 20-26, January 1901, National Archives, Bangladesh.

should be model schools for girls at important centres such as district head-quarters, and the course of studies for those schools should be more suited to the requirements of women." [12]

The scope for devising special schemes for improvement in the condition of girls' education in Eastern Bengal came with the Partition of Bengal in 1905. A separate Department of Education was formed for the new Province of Eastern Bengal and Assam with Henry Sharp as the DPI. The newly appointed Lieutenant-Governor Lancelot Hare took a personal interest in systematizing the condition of girls' schools in Eastern Bengal and Assam without throwing caution to the winds. He felt that the extent of Government involvement in the case of female education should be in the form of "guidance and assistance on practical lines which accord with public sentiment."[13] Accordingly, the DPI Henry Sharp was requested to seek the opinion of responsible people in the government, from the Christian missionaries of various denominations and notable men who had close ties with the government, about ways of effectively and comprehensively organizing the administration of female education in this hitherto neglected region. This was done through the circulation of a questionnaire in 1907 and formation of a Female Education Committee in 1908 to formulate policy on the basis of the guidelines provided by the answers received with Robert Nathan as the President of the Committee.[14]

The lasting contribution of the FEC which was formed only to formulate recommendations, with no power whatsoever to influence the Government regarding implementation was the exclusive data it generated for Eastern Bengal. Thus it is for the partition interlude (1905-1911) only that we find separate statistics for the Eastern Bengal region. We come to know that among the small number of Europeans, Eurasians, and Native Christian girls that were to be found in Eastern Bengal, whereas there had been 1,294 girls studying in schools in the fiscal year 1901-1902, the numbers had risen to 1,706 in 1906-1907 and to 2,243 in 1911-1912.[15] Among Hindu girls, the increase had been from 17,888 to 33,841 and 53,404. Among the Muslim population, the proportion of girls actually at school to those of school-going age was really low compared to all the other communities mentioned above. Even then, the numbers do not seem to be too

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[12] Ibid.

[13] Extract from the Proceeding s of the Lieutenant-Governor of Eastern Bengal and Assam in the Education Department, No. 360-E, dated the 17th February 1908, Assam Secretariat, Sylhet Proceedings, National Archives, Bangladesh.

[14] For the full questionnaire and names of the members of the FEC, please see chapter 1.

[15] *Report on the Progress of Education in Eastern Bengal and Assam During the Years 1907-1908 to 1911-1912*, vol. 1 (CalcuttaL The Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, 1913), p. 93, The University of Dhaka Library.

disappointing. From 5,564 girls going to school in 1901-02, the numbers rose to 16,468 in 1906-07 and to 56,683 in 1911-12.

The rapid advance of Muslim girls' education during the Partition interlude was heartening. But it has to be remembered that the girls in traditional *Koran* schools and *maktab*s were included in the figures for the period. Those traditional schools that still remained taught only how to read the Holy Qur'an. As for the steady decline in the number of Hindu and other communities, it is our guess that as Bengal was partitioned into provinces based on Muslim and Hindu majority populations, it is highly likely that after the Partition many Hindu families left Eastern Bengal to settle in West Bengal (just as when Bengal was divided again in 1947).

Nevertheless, Muslim families had begun to take advantage of the presence of girls' schools to enhance their wards' possibilities of making better matches in the marriage market. Matrimonial advertisements were a novel introduction to match-making practices and rituals in Bengal. According to researchers, the three factors that had caused the decline in the profession of match-making were urbanization, institutional education based on the Western model and the rise of the print media. Advertising in the newspapers replaced the practice of seeking help from professional match-makers. These advertisements featured brides who could read and write as an added qualification.[16] This new phenomenon even found its way in the quinquennial educational report of the DPI where, while explaining what material causes helped to dissipate the prejudices which had for long prevented guardians from sending their girls to schools, the DPI says that guardians have, through practical experience, found out that with the progress of boys' education, "the selection of a bride now-a-days depends no less upon her ability to read and write with tolerable ease, than upon the health and general appearance."[17]

Quantitative expansion, however, did not ensure that quality would increase at a similar rate. Good pedagogy depended on several factors, for example, trained teachers, good infrastructure, good teaching equipments, good quality primers, necessary facilities and students, and, last but not the least, proper supervision and good management. Throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the dearth, and sometimes the sheer unavailability of teachers,

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[16] Majumdar, Rochona, *Marriage and Modernity: Family Values in Colonial Bengal*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2009) p. 2.

[17] Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, *Report on the Progress of Education in Eastern Bengal and Assam During the Years 1907-1908 to 1911-1912*, vol. 1 (Calcutta: The Bengal Secretariat Depot, 1913), p. 92.

trained or untrained, had always posed a huge problem in sustaining schools for girls. In 1907 teacher training classes had opened in the premises of the Eden Female School. But the output of trained women teachers was in no way commensurate with the demand. With the creation of the demand for women in teaching positions, the first steps towards women's paid work had been taken. The symbolic identification of personal worth was directly related to the wage she earned. Having for centuries toiled in the domestic space unremunerated and unacknowledged, the working woman now had established her worth.[18] An economic motivation for education was created. The lack of a purpose for girls' education had for centuries been the cause for what Gerda Lerner calls the "trained ignorance" of girls.[19] Before the advent of women in the professions of nursing, teaching and practitioners of medicine the attitude of society to women's paid work was one of scorn and disrespect because paid work was generally the preserve of women in the entertainment profession. The image of the school mistress corresponded with the highest moral standards of the day. She was supposed to have good manners and be correct in her conduct. The persona of the school mistress enhanced the reputation of the school itself. Academic qualifications of a mistress were secondary to the respectability she could bring to the institution.[20]

When the socio-economic scenario changed, the attitude to girls' education also changed. The shift in attitude resulted in the 'creation of a childhood' for the girls of Eastern Bengal. In 1960, when the French scholar Philippe Aries claimed in his seminal work *Centuries of Childhood* that childhood was not a biological given, but a socially constructed concept, the world of academia was taken by surprise.[21] The school system, Aries argued, created a childhood for young scholars by sharply demarcating the adult and child worlds. Until the nineteenth century in Europe, Aries argued, boys and girls became little adults at the age that today we consider as childhood, because they started apprenticeships for their future vocation in life from the age of seven. Hence, there was no concept of childhood in the sense that we understand now. The same theory is applicable to of Bengal. The marriage for girls was between seven and nine.

[18] For an elaborate discussion of wage earning and individual worth, see Hall, Catherine and Davidoff, Leonore (eds.), *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850* (London: Routledge, reprint, 1992), p. 285.
[19] Lerner, Gerda, *The Creation of Feminist Consciousness* (New York, 1993).
[20] Op.cit., p. 285.
[21] For details on the impact of schools in the creation of a childhood for both boys and girls, see Aries, Philippe, *Centuries of Childhood* , translated by Robert Baldick (New York, 1962) and Cunningham, *Children and Childhood in Western Society since 1500* (London: Longman, 1995).

A ten or eleven year-old girl was considered too 'old.' Having a daughter at home who had crossed the age of ten but could not yet be given away in marriage brought shame to the entire extended family. There was no childhood innocence for a girl as she began learning how to cope in her marital home right after she was weaned from her mother who herself had been a child bride. When social attitudes changed, the idea of sending girls to school and also keeping them there until the end of the primary or secondary stage gained ground among enlightened families. This created a space of pre-adult innocence for girls (and boys), an environment shared with other children of the same age amidst an atmosphere that only childhood could generate.

Finally, having said that attitudes towards girls' education had begun to change from the second half of the nineteenth century, the question of funds for these enterprises remained a major obstacle. Contrary to popular belief, it was not the British who had taken the major initiatives to spread female education in the erstwhile Eastern Bengal (Bangladesh). True, the (white) Christian missionaries were the first to build schools for girls, but their schools did not last after they left their respective stations. Schools built with local initiative, on land acquired from the philanthropists, managed by the locals were the ones that got sustained longevity. The only Government managed and funded school in Eastern Bengal was the Eden Female School (like the Bethune School in Calcutta). Even this school was built with local initiative and later handed over to the Government for management. It was the only Government English High School in Eastern Bengal in the period of our study.

Under the Diarchy of 1919, Government withdrew from the responsibility of education by transferring it to the local bodies. Unfortunately, however, the transfer of responsibility was not complemented with a corresponding transfer of the control of funds. The District and Municipality Boards were hard pressed for financing. The little money that could be spared was spent on a priority basis for boys' schools. Government did not make separate financial arrangements for girls' schools despite repeated requests from concerned quarters. When the Female Education Committee recommended the increase in teachers' pay, increase in grant-in-aid for girls' schools and increase in Government scholarships and prizes as incentive to students, the officials responsible for implementation of the recommendations shrugged

responsibility by saying that those were mere mathematical exercises, not to be bothered with.[22] The political rhetoric of development always existed, but in reality, the push that was needed in the form of increased fund allocation, was never forthcoming.

Nonetheless, the tide of women's quest for education never lost its momentum. The new educated woman of the twentieth century penetrated the professional world and the world of literary culture. Education was a major force in redefining women's roles in the family, in society and also in the political life of the State. There were similarities in the patterns of the development of women's education which took place in the nineteenth century in England and America. A comparative study with the Eastern Bengal experience would be a fruitful exercise. Such studies would be useful for different regions of India during colonial rule as well. Women's education could be an important component in the discipline of comparative studies as every region has factors and forces unique to its own socio-economic and political history. The role of the vernacular press in shaping the attitude towards female education and the formation of various organizations to promote it has remained outside the purview of this study. It would be a significant contribution to knowledge if research could be conducted from that perspective at some future date.

[22] See Nayeem, Asha Islam, 'Redesigning the Zenana', in Powell and Lambert-Hurley (eds.), *Rhetoric and Reality* (Delhi, 2007).

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