

CHAPTER 1
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This chapter begins with a brief description of socio-cultural features of Khasi-Jaintia society prior to the advent of the Seventh-day Adventist Church (hereafter cited as SDA). It includes the Christian missions and the churches established prior to the SDA and the changing socio-cultural life of the Khasi-Jaintia. Historiographical issues related to the statement of the problem are reflected in the review of literature. In addition, the objective of the study, methodology and a framework for all chapters are included under this chapter.

Writing of the history of Christianity and its study as a discipline in Universities across India has been gaining ground in the recent past. It is understandable that the church does not exist in isolation. The establishment and growth of a church may come as a need of the society or the need of a church to expand. In the process, this development has to reflect and cater to the spiritual process that may arise from the events in the society, as well as the need to relocate and adjust to the social, political and cultural dimensions of a society. Since SDA is a growing church, hence it is felt there is a need to study the growth and development of this church and the study will reflect the socio-cultural and religious aspects of Khasi-Jaintia society too. Moreover, no historical study of a denomination can be studied in a vacuum; therefore, as per the guidelines of the Church History Association of India (CHAI), it is imperative to study the society to which the SDA came. To understand the nature of SDA in Khasi-Jaintia Hills it is important to situate its place of origin and the mechanisms playing upon it that makes it what it is today globally and Khasi-Jaintia in particular. Hence, this thesis is not only the study of the Church but the ramification as seen in its interaction with the Khasi-Jaintia society and its considerable influence on many areas of the society. In this connection, it becomes imperative to study the philosophy of the SDA in order to understand its work and place in the society and the same is dealt in the second chapter of this thesis.

The origin and development of SDA can be traced to the larger developments that took place in American polity, economy, society, culture and religion in the nineteenth century. The religious movements that started in America in the 1790s

were the outcome of the changing conditions of America and Americans. The Millerite Movement¹ is one among these movements which influenced the Americans and subsequently a branch of it developed as the SDA. The SDA emerged during the nineteenth century in America as a response to the failed prediction that Jesus Christ would come in 1844.² The name, "Seventh-day Adventist"³ was adopted by the SDA as the appropriate name of the denomination, representing its two doctrines: observance of Sabbath⁴ and its emphasis on the imminent Second Coming of Jesus Christ.⁵ Besides these beliefs, the Adventists also adopted several distinctive beliefs which distinguish them from other Christians. This will be discussed in the succeeding chapters. The subject for choosing the name for the Church was discussed and debated at length in conferences organized by early Adventists. When the question of adopting a church name was brought up various titles were suggested.⁶ However, there were opinions within the Church that since they were Sabbath keepers who also have strong beliefs on the early advent of Jesus Christ, therefore the name should reflect their beliefs. Hence the title 'Seventh-day Adventists' was chosen after gaining approval in the conference held at Battle Creek, Michigan in 1860.⁷ The official formation of the SDA was at its General Conference at Battle Creek in 1863, where the constitution of the Church was drafted.⁸ The term 'Seventh-day Adventists' is also abbreviated as 'SDA'. However, this abbreviation frequently confuses many

¹ The movement was initiated by William Miller in the 1840's in United States. Miller predicted the day of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. His followers were known as Millerites. Second Coming of Jesus Christ is a Christian belief that Jesus will return to earth physically.

² John R. Hall, Philip D. Schuyler, and Sylvaine Trinh, *Apocalypse Observed Religious Movements and Violence in North America, Europe and Japan*, Routledge, London, New York, 2000, pp.46-48.

³ The name Seventh-day Adventist was suggested by David Hewitt, the first Sabbath keeper in Battle Creek, Michigan.

⁴ General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Belief and Work of Seventh-day Adventists*, Pacific Press Publication Association, California, 1934, p.7.

⁵ James White, *Sermons on the Coming and Kingdom of Our Lord Jesus Christ*, Steam Press of the Seventh-Day Adventist Publishing Association, Michigan, 1870, p.3.

⁶ There were several names given to them such as 'The Remnant', 'Believers', and 'The Scattered Flock'. They were also given other names as 'Seventh Day People', 'Sabbath keeping Advent Believers', 'Sabbath keeping Adventists', 'Seventh-day Brethren', 'Advent Sabbath Keepers', 'Seventh-day Door Shutters', 'Church of God', 'Seven Day Evangelists', 'Sabbath Keeping', 'Remnant of Adventists' 'God's Commandment-keeping People', 'the Little Flock' and 'Shut-door Seventh-day Sabbath and Annihilationists'. See, Godfrey T. Anderson, "Make Us a Name", *Adventist Heritage: A Magazine of Adventist History*, Vol. 1, No. 2, 1974, p.29.

⁷ Arthur W. Spalding, *Origin and History of Seventh-day Adventists*, Vols. 4, Review and Herald Publishing Association, Washington D.C., 1961-62, p.357.

⁸ The first article of the constitution states: "This Conference shall be called the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists." see, Godfrey T. Anderson, *op.cit.*, p.34.

persons because the acronym 'SDA' is also shared by many other groups.⁹ Under the chapter three of this dissertation, we will discuss in details the origin and development of SDA in America and its expansion to other parts of the world through its foreign mission. It was the latter which brought the SDA to the Khasi-Jaintia Hills.

A regular mission of the SDA in India was established in 1895. Shillong, being the seat of administration, trade and mission activities of the then Assam and northeast India soon attracted the missionaries of the SDA. Since the first decade of the twentieth century, SDA's missionaries visited Khasi-Jaintia Hills regularly and some of them stayed in Shillong as well. It was in 1934 that a formal mission was started with the arrival of J.F. Ashlock.¹⁰ The first half of the twentieth century, was important due to the fact that the Khasi-Jaintia society was undergoing a transformation. Hence, the religious, social, cultural and political conditions in the nineteenth and early twentieth century will throw light on the Khasi-Jaintia society on the eve of the advent of the SDA.

KHASI-JAINTIA SOCIETY AND CULTURE

The Khasi-Jaintia are inhabitants of the state of Meghalaya. The Khasi consist of the sub-groups of Khasi Hills viz., the Khyntiam who inhabit the central plateau, the War in the steep areas of the south and the Bhoi in the north. The ones who occupy the Jaintia Hills are the Pnar or Synteng. For our study we refer to these groups as Khasi-Jaintia. Prior to the arrival of the Christian missionaries, the Khasi-Jaintia had no script of their own, and hence had no written history. In the nineteenth century, when colonialism and Christianity expanded, the Khasi-Jaintia were exposed to new political and social ideas and structures of thought. While adopting these new systems of the British, changes in their culture were inevitable. It is in this light, the study tries to examine changes in different areas in Khasi-Jaintia society which had great influence on the traditional life of the people. However, it took some time for the Khasi-Jaintia to accept the Western religious ideas and new traditions. It was only towards the end of the nineteenth century that Christianity gained a significant

⁹ For example: Survey Documentation and Analysis, Sociological Data Archive, Symbolic Device Address, Singapore Democratic Alliance, and many more. Hence, the SDA is sometimes referred by the term 'Adventist(s)'.

¹⁰ L. G. Mukherjee, "Early Days in the North East", *Eastern Tidings*, Vol.40, No.18, September, 1945, p.4.

foothold among all sections of the Khasi-Jaintia. During the early twentieth century, numbers of conversion to Christianity not only increased tremendously but there was rapid transformation of the Khasi-Jaintia society.¹¹

One of the unique features of the Khasi-Jaintia is their matrilineal system, in which lineage is traced from the mother.¹² The Khasi-Jaintia depends largely on a clan (*Kur*) based structure of their family and society. The *Kur* plays a significant role in most aspects of the life of the people. Marriage within the same *Kur* known as *Shongsang* is an unpardonable sin.¹³ After marriage, matrilocality residence is followed by the Khasi-Jaintia. However, the matrilocality is seen to be strictly practised among the Jaintia than the Khasi. During the day time, a Jaintia man spends his day working at his mother's field and has his meals as well and visited his children's home after.¹⁴ In early Khasi-Jaintia society it seems that a husband can have another wife called *ka tnga tuh* (mistress), in contradistinction to the *tnga trai* (legally married wife).¹⁵ Divorce was common among the Khasi-Jaintia which may occur due to adultery, barrenness or incompatibility of temperament, etc. In Khasi society it is known as *ia pyllait san shyiang* (permanent divorce) while the Jaintia calls it *ia pyllait kurim* (divorce).¹⁶ In Khasi-Jaintia society, re-marriage of widows, widowers and divorcees are allowed, though after a considerable period of time. A husband can also marry his younger sister in law in the event of the death of his

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.207.

¹² See Chie Nakane, *Garo and Khasi: A Comparative Study in Matrilineal Systems*, Paris, 1967.

¹³ For details see Juanita War, "The Incest Taboo and Clanship System among the Khasis", *Khasi Studies*, Vol.III, No.1, April-June 1989, p.4-11. *Knia Sang* or rituals of purification are performed to prevent the entire clan from committing the incest. Also see, Sujata Miri, (ed.), *Religion and Society of North East India*, Vikas Publishing House, 1980, p.63-65.

¹⁴ The earning of the husband is transferred to his mother and on his death his property is passed to his maternal kin. See, S. K. Chattopadhyaya, *The Jaintias*, Cosmo Publications, New Delhi, 1988, p.18.

¹⁵ The children born from *ka tnga tuh* were known as *khun kliar* and were not entitled to inherit any property, with an exception of the War. U Jeebon Roy, *Ka Niam Khasi*, p.13 as cited in P.R.T. Gurdon, *The Khasis*, Cosmo Publications, Delhi, 1975, pp.80-81.

¹⁶ Among the Khasi, divorce ceremony used to be performed in front of the elders and public declaration of the divorce was done after one party pay a compensation amount known as *bai mynrain khmat*. In Jaintia Hills, it was done in the residence of *Ka Langdoh* (priestess) in the presence of *U Wasan* (customary chief). After the compensation amount known as *thnem* is paid, the divorce is publicized by the *Wasan*. For details see, *Socio Economic Survey Thadlaskein Block*, Directorate of Arts and Culture Tribal Research Institute, Shillong, 1990, p.29. Also see, Shobhan N. Lamare, *The Jaintias: Studies in Society and Change*, Regency Publication, New Delhi, 2001, p.24.

wife.¹⁷ The male played a more responsible and proactive role in his mother's home than in his children's.¹⁸ The *Khadduh* (youngest daughter) is the custodian of the ancestral property and inherits a major share of the property.¹⁹ She is also responsible to look after the old and poor members of the family and helped *U Kni* (maternal uncle) in performance of rituals.²⁰ The dual role of a Khasi-Jaintia male as an uncle and father indicate the patrilineal trait in the system which is quite unique and distinct from the other societies.²¹

In the pre-colonial period, the majority of the Khasi-Jaintia mainly practised agriculture. Some of them were also involved in manufacturing works, rearing livestock, weaving, bee keeping, pottery, handicraft and trading. Many iron tools and implements were manufactured since the people were also expert in iron smelting.²² Slavery was also said to have been practised in Khasi-Jaintia Hills and *mraw* (slaves) were acquired for labour either through debt or captives of war.²³

With regards to polity, there are some states in Khasi-Jaintia Hills believed to have mythical origin of their rulers,²⁴ while in other states, the chiefs (*Syiem* and *Lyngdoh*) were elected. The traditional political institution of the Khasi-Jaintia was based on a democratic system of government. In the Khasi-Jaintia Hills, the stages of

¹⁷ Hamlet Bareh, *The History and Culture of the Khasi People*, Spectrum Publications, Guwahati, 1997, 295

¹⁸ For details see, Amena Nora Passah, "Role of Khasi Jaintia Women of the Meghalaya Plateau in Pre Colonial Society and Economy", in Mignonette Momin and Cecile A. Mawlong, *Society and Economy in North-East India Vol: I*, Published by Regency, New Delhi, 2004.

¹⁹ J. N. Chowdhury pointed out that in Khasi society, there used to be a institution of *ka pynkam* (share) in which a mother share the ancestral property amongst her sons, but only for their term of life. See, J. N. Chowdhury, *The Khasi Canvas: A Cultural and Political History*, Chapala Book Stall, Shillong, 1978, p.152. However, he failed to mention that an exception can be made of the War Shella, on the southern Hills where the property is shared equally among sons and daughters. For more readings see, Hamlet Bareh, *op.cit.*, p.296.

²⁰ David Roy, "Principles of Khasi Culture", *Folklore*, Vol. 47, No. 4, December 1936, pp. 375-393.

²¹ Sweetymon Rynjah, *Khasi Traditional Dancing Ornaments*, Ri Khasi Book Agency, Shillong, 2011, pp.11-12.

²² For details on the economic activity of the Khasi-Jaintia see, Namita Catherine Shadap-Sen, *op.cit.*, *The Origin and Early History of the Khasi-Synteng People*, Ferma Pvt. Ltd., Calcutta, 1981, pp.243-255.

²³ *Ibid.*, p.201.

²⁴ Among the Khasi the legend of Ka Pahsyntiew, youngest daughter of U 'Lei Shillong (God of Shillong) was the mother of the chief of Shillong while the origin of the Jaintia Royal family was based on the legend of the wedlock of U Lo Ryndi and Ka Lidakha.

administration ranged from the state to the village level.²⁵ The appointment of the office of the officials from the highest to the lowest level was selected on the basis of consensus decision and the succession was traced from the lineage of a mother on a hereditary basis. In the case of the Jaintia, the political administration of the state was monarchical in nature.²⁶

Dances of the Khasi-Jaintia accompanied by several musical instruments are part of both religious and non-religious festivals.²⁷ The Khasi-Jaintia are very fond of using jewellery, not only during festivals but also in their day to day life. While some ornaments are used daily, expensive ones such as gold and coral ornaments are used only on special occasions. They also like to indulge themselves in traditional games and sports which are meant for both recreation and physical fitness.²⁸ Games such as *iasiat thong* (archery), *iakhun wait* (swordsmanship) and *leit beh mrad* (community hunting) occupied the leisure time of men as well as to train themselves for defence.²⁹

²⁵ The *Hima* (state) is headed by a *Syiem* (chief) who was assisted by the *Lyngdoh* (priest) *Myntri* (minister), *Basan* (elder) and *Lyngshkor* (collector). Then comes the *Raid* (conglomeration of villages) under the *Sordar* (leader of the conglomeration) and the *Dorbar Shnong* at the village level is headed by the *Rangbah Shnong* (Village headman). While there are few states in which the *Lyngdoh* acted as chief. Among the war of Shella, the *Wahadadar* is the top most official.

²⁶ The *Raja* was the ruler of Jaintiapur in the plains (in present day Bangladesh) and Jaintia Hills, followed by the *Dorbar Raid* under the *Doloi* (governor) who looked after the *Elaka* (province) and then there is *Dorbar Chnong* (village durbar), under the officials, the *Langdoh*, *Basan*, *Pator*, *Sangot* and *Waheh Chnong*. For further details see, S. K. Chattopadhyaya, (ed.), *The Tribal Institution of Meghalaya*, Spectrum Publications, Guwahati, 1985, p.82.

²⁷ For further readings on traditional instruments see, P. Ripple Kyndiah, "A Peep into Khasi and Jaintia Music", in H. Roy (ed.), *Khasi Heritage*, Seng Khasi, Shillong, 1979, pp.153-159; Also see Lapyinshai Syiem, *The Evolution of Khasi Music: A Study of the Classical Content*, Regency Publications, 2005. In the Khasi Hills, the festival known as *Shad Pomblang* (goat-killing dance) used to be held at Shillong to propitiate *U Blei Shyllong*, while non-religious dances such as *Mastieh* and *Shad Wait* (sword dance) are performed in many parts of Khasi Hills. The Behdeinkhlam festival is closely connected to the religion of the Jaintia in which prayer are made to the divine elements for chasing away demons which causes plague. In Jaintia Hills, *Pastieh* and *Laho* are most important ceremonial dances. For details on festivals and dances of Khasi-Jaintia see, Pristilla Rina Lyngdoh, *The Festivals in the history and culture of the Khasi*, Har-Anand Publications in association with Vikas Publishing House, 1991.

²⁸ In the Khasi Hills, other common games and amusements include *khruk khruk* (dice playing), *iamareh thong* (race), *iarieh* (hide and seek), *iatantyllai* (tug of war), *shongsoh padoi* (season), *siatsim* (bird catching), *khwai dohkha* (fishing), *iatur masi* (bull fight) and *iatoh syiar* (cock fight).

²⁹ Hamlet Bareh, *op.cit.*, p.305.

In Jaintia Hills, *Rajas* organized hunting campaigns, and combat of elephants and buffaloes.³⁰

The concept of religion of the Khasi and Jaintia in the pre-colonial period was imbued in their ancient traditional thoughts. The basic philosophical theories about their beliefs and practices wholly rely on the oral instructions of their ancestors.³¹ The traditional faith is known to the Khasi as *Ka Niam Khasi* and to the Jaintia *Ka Niam Tre*.³² The religion was basically *Niam ing* or *Niam iung* (home religion) which covered the rituals performed within a family, a clan, or a state. There was no congregation of the people such as the church in Christianity or other popular religions. The concept of God in the religion of the Khasi-Jaintia is the belief that God was represented in different connotations according to the associated modes in different aspects of His creation.³³ He is the supreme and personal God but the unseen one.³⁴ God can be worshipped anywhere but home was much preferred where the

³⁰ *Lives of the Lindsays*, Vol. II, Calcutta, 1849, p.178, as cited in Hamlet Bareh, *op.cit.*, pp. 306-307. Games such as *iasiat thong*, *iaphetphari* (race), *iarieh*, *iatantyllai* (tug of war), *nohsakyriat* (seasow), *ka rah mookrah* (weight lifting), *iaslait* (wrestling), *siatsim* (bird catching), *khwaidohkha* (fishing), *e-iadawmasi* (bull fight) and *iapuhsyiar* (cock fight), are some of the common games and amusements enjoyed by the Jaintia in leisure times and festivals. For details see, *The Enchanting Life and Culture of the Jaintias of Meghalaya*, Directorate of Information and Public Relations, Shillong, 2005, pp.58-63.

³¹ The Khasi-Jaintia ancestors used parables to infuse consciousness and knowledge in the mindset of the people about the essence and sacredness of the relationship between human with the Creator, with nature and surroundings. The most famous parables contained in the myths of “U Lumsohpetbneng”, “Ka Jingkieng Ksiar” and “U Diengiei”. For details on these myths, see H. O. Mawrie, *The Essence of the Khasi Religion*, published by the author, Ri Khasi Printing Press. Shillong, 1981; Kynpham S. Nongkynrih, *Around the Hearth: Khasi Legends*, Penguin Books, New Delhi, 2007; Sumar Sing Sawian, *Ki Khun Ki Hajar Na Jingkieng Ksiar*, Future Creations, Shillong, 2nd Reprint, 2010.

³² For further readings on Khasi and Jaintia traditional religion, see, Jeebon Roy, *Ka Niam jong ki Khasi*, n.p., Shillong, 1897; H. Lyngdoh, *Ka Niam Khasi*, Desmond P. Reade Diengdoh, Shillong, 1970; and *Ki Syiem Khasi bad Synteng*, Desmond P. Reade Diengdoh, Shillong, (first published 1938) 3rd edition, Shillong, 2003; Sein Khyntoo-Khylllood Sein Raj Jowai, *Ka Kot Niam Tre ka Raj Jowai*, Jowai, 1991; Sein Raj Jowai, *U Tre Ki Rot ha u Niaw Wasa*, n.p., Jowai, 1993. H. O. Mawrie, *Ka Theology Jong Ka Niam Khasi*, Mrs. Tmissilda Soh, Shillong, 3rd Edition 2002 and *U Khasi bad la ka Niam*, Mrs.Tmissilda Soh, Shillong, 2013; T. Rodborne, *Ka Niam Jong u Khasi Pnar*, H. Rodborne, 3rd edition Shillong, 2011; Sib Charan Roy, *Ka Niam Ki Khasi, Ka Niam Tip Blei Tip Briew*. n.p, Shillong, 1919; Rabon Singh, *Ka Kitab Niam-Khein Ki Khasi*, Fair Beaulah Lyngdoh, Shillong, n.d.

³³ This can be found in the expression of Gabrielle Bertrand, “There are gods of the state, of wealth and of water, and also the tutelary god of the village to whom sacrifice is offered every year, or whenever necessary... this... religion can be defined as means of averting disaster or gaining the goodwill of a spirit who dispenses good or evil fortune by offering sacrifices in his honour.” See, Gabrielle Bertrand, *Secret Lands where Women Reign*, Robert Hale Limited, London, 1958, p.130.

³⁴ T. Nongsiej, *Khasi Cultural Theology*, ISPCK, Delhi, 2002, p.25.

family is in constant need of His help and blessings.³⁵ The Khasi-Jaintia, therefore, have no special building consecrated for mass worship. Nature itself serves as an altar for the rituals. Preservation of certain parts of the forests as sacred grooves (*Law Kyntang*) by the people was also considered important link between human and nature. The Khasi-Jaintia does not patronize any human as a holy person since to them no human can attain perfection or sainthood. They neither used any symbol or mark to represent their religion nor had a fixed day of worship.

Rituals have long played a vital and essential role in religion of the Khasi-Jaintia, but are not an entirety in them. To the Khasi-Jaintia, religion also encompasses different aspects of everyday life; from human thoughts to ethics and deeds.³⁶ Naming ceremonies are performed as soon as a child was born.³⁷ Certain rituals are also performed during cremation ceremonies, generally done to pray for the safe journey of the spirit of the deceased.³⁸ After the cremation, the Khasi collected the bones of the deceased and place them inside a stone cairn called *Mawshyieng*.³⁹ The Jaintia call it *Moo-Tylleñ*.⁴⁰ Another feature of the Khasi-Jaintia is the monoliths which are called *Mawbyinna* and *Moo-Pyniein* respectively. These are erected as memorial stones to commemorate an event or as tribute to ancestors.⁴¹ Furthermore, in order to obtain blessings from God, a person should live a good life on earth, so that when he or she dies, will earn the privilege to sit at the compound of God (*Bam Kwai ha DwarU Blei*).⁴² Therefore they subscribed to the three tenets that a person must adopt, *Tip Briew Tip Blei* or *Tip Bru Tip-Blai* (know man know God), *Tip Kur*

³⁵ R. T. Rymbai, "Some Aspects of the religion of the Khasi-Pnars", in H. Roy (ed.), *Khasi Heritage*, Seng Khasi, Shillong, 1979, p.115.

³⁶ Barnes L. Mawrie, *An Introduction to Khasi Ethics*, DBCIC Publications, Shillong, 2005.

³⁷ During the ceremony prayers are offered and materials such as bows, arrows, dao, basket, cane-belt, liquor and special beer are used. See, Hamlet Bareh, *op.cit.*, p.295.

³⁸ During the ceremony items such as rice, water, boiled egg, rice beer, leaves, etc. were used. Among the Khasi the body of the death is kept at the house for two nights and cremation took place in the afternoon of the third day. While the Jaintia used to keep the corpse for a night and cremation used to be done in the early hours of the following day. For details on the death ceremony see, Namita Catherine Shadap-Sen, *op.cit.*, pp.227-241.

³⁹ The bundle of the bones used to be taken to the ossuaries of the clan called *Mawbah*.

⁴⁰ *Jaintia Hills District Gazetteer*, Directorate of Arts and Culture, Shillong, 1995, p.33.

⁴¹ Detailed work on monoliths is done by David Roy in his "The Megalithic Culture of the Khasi", *Anthropos*, Vol.58, 1963: as cited in Malcolm David Roy, *David Roy A Khasi Remembered*, published by the author, Shillong, 2012, pp.214-272; for more details also see, Kynpham Singh, "The Monoliths of the Khasi-Jaintia Hills", H. Roy (ed.), *Khasi Heritage*, Seng Khasi, Shillong, 1979, pp.159-170.

⁴² R. T. Rymbai, "Christian Missions and the Indigenous Religion of the Khasi-Pnar", in Soumen Sen (ed.), *Religion in North East India*, Uppal Publishing House, New Delhi, 1993, pp.75-76.

Tip Kha (know your maternal and paternal relations) and *Kamai ia ka Hok* or *Kamai-ia-ii-Hok* (earn righteousness).⁴³

The Khasi-Jaintia society, like many ancient societies is not free from the beliefs in certain spirits which are considered evil by the people. Among such spirits held in great fear by the Khasi, *U Thlen* (serpent) was associated with granting of wealth to the one who supplied it with human blood.⁴⁴ In the same context, the Jaintia believed in the possession of *Ka Taro* (female demonic spirit) in order to acquire wealth. However, unlike the victims of *U Thlen*, those of *Ka Taro* suffered from delirium and fever and very seldom died of the illness.⁴⁵

Though the traditional Khasi religion does not follow any organized form of priesthood, the *Lyngdoh* also known as the *Sohblei* perform all the rituals and hence occupies a prestigious position in the society. He acts as a mediator between God and human through the divinatory process.⁴⁶ Since he has the knowledge of the rituals to appease the spirits and deities, he was entrusted with a task to offer sacrifices on behalf of the community.⁴⁷ Furthermore, the *Lyngdoh* dispenses herbal medicines during the outbreak of epidemics.⁴⁸ At the same time the *Lyngdoh* acted as adviser to the *Syiem*, and in the case of the Jaintia, the *Doloi* and *Langdoh* provide similar services. In some Khasi states, the *Lyngdoh Nongsynshar* assumed the power both as

⁴³ H. Kelian Synrem, "Religion of the Khasis", in *Ka Thup Buh Jingkynmaw Shispah Snem 1899-1999*, Seng Khasi, Shillong, 1999, p.109; For detail discussions see J. K. Tariang, *The Philosophy and Essence of Niam Khasi*, Ms.Ipomea Warshong and Mr. J. Kerrsingh Tariang, Shillong, 2012, pp.56-68.

⁴⁴ In his work Gurdon provide account about the practice of keeping *U Thlen* in Khasi society, see P.R.T. Gurdon, *op.cit.*, pp. 98-104. For other details on *U Thlen* see, O. L. Snaitang, "An Exploration of Dimensional Perspective of Devils and Evil Designs among the Khasi-Jaintia People of Meghalaya", in Prasenjit Biswas & C. Joshua Thomas (eds.), *Construction of Evil in North East India: Myth, Narrative and Discourse*, Sage Publications India Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 2012, pp.157-173.

⁴⁵ Namita Catherine Shadap-Sen, *op.cit.*, p.215; also see Ivan Martin Simon, *Khasi and Jaintia Tales and Beliefs*, Department of Tribal Culture and Folklore Research, Gauhati University, 1966.

⁴⁶ He also performed rituals for the community at large at the state level to appease God and the spirits. Materials used in these rituals include the egg, liquor, rice beer, betel leaf and others. Divination also played an important role in the beliefs of Khasi and Jaintia. People often resorted to divination to seek counsel in matters of the family and clan. See, Nalini Nataranjan, *The Missionary among the Khasis*, Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi. 1977.

⁴⁷ Iarington Kharkongor, *The Tribal People*, published by the author, Shillong, 1994, p.23.

⁴⁸ The Khasi were victims of periodic outbreaks of epidemics of cholera and small pox without proper remedies. The *Lyngdoh* performed rituals to appease the spirits who were believed to cause those ailments. For details see, P. N. Dutta, *Impact of the West on the Khasis and Jaintias*, Cosmo Publications, New Delhi, 1982.

the religious and administrative head of the state.⁴⁹ A woman cannot attain the position of a *Lyngdoh*, she only assists him by preparing the necessary materials required for the rituals.

Thus from the above discussions, one can understand that the whole structure of Khasi-Jaintia society is clan centered. In the pre-colonial Khasi-Jaintia society, *U Kni* wielded greater influence at his mother or sister (s)' house than at his children's. Although the *Khadduh* inherits a large portion of the property, she cannot assume complete authority over the ancestral property without the knowledge of her brothers or her mother.⁵⁰ However, apart from property and guardian, she had greater socio-economic role to play. It is ironic that the Khasi-Jaintia society which follows strict rule on inter-clan marriage has certain drawbacks which may sound surprising. There was tendency by some scholars to state that polygamy may be clandestinely practiced by some husbands. However, it may be suggested that the other women besides a wife might be a concubine or mistress or a captured female prisoner. We have also seen that divorce was not prohibited in the Khasi-Jaintia society. Although no rituals are required during the process of announcing a divorce, certain amount of payment was required as compensation. It is interesting to find that among the Khasi, it was carried out in the presence of the elders, whereas among the Jaintia, it was done in the presence of a *Wasan* (elder) in the residence of *Ka Lyngdoh*. The practice of marrying only the younger sister in case of the death of a man's wife is prevalent among the Khasi-Jaintia. Rituals played important role in the events of child naming ceremony and during the cremation of the dead. Monolithic culture placed the Khasi-Jaintia at the level with other megalithic cultures around the globe,⁵¹ although the objective of erecting the stones may have different purposes. We also found that the Khasi-Jaintia depend largely on agriculture. However, with regards to the opinion that slavery used to exist in Khasi-Jaintia society, it may be assumed that the word '*mraw*' might be another Khasi word for servant. By appropriating the divine origin of the ruling class, top positions in the society also were placed on their hands. However, the officials of every level of administration were chosen by consensus of the council or people. In

⁴⁹ Only three *Himas* are under the headship of the *Lyngdoh Nongsynshar*, viz., Mawphlang, Lyngiong and Sohiong.

⁵⁰ Tiplut Nongbri, "Problems of Matriliney: A Short Review of the Khasi Kinship Structure", in J. S. Bhandari, *Kinship and Family in North-East India*, Cosmo Publications, New Delhi, 1996, p.337.

⁵¹ Mention can be made of the popular megalithic culture of the Germans, Irish, British, Israelites, Jordanians, Russians, Sardinians, Ethiopians, Welsh and South India.

spite of the position of women being held in high esteem in the matrilineal system of the Khasi-Jaintia society, yet political powers are vested only with men. There are religious and non-religious festivals among the Khasi-Jaintia, and from the kind of games and sports that they played, we can understand that the general motive was to entertain but in most cases they were also training themselves in the art of warfare and community life. We should also take note that they love to adorn themselves with various kinds of jewellery and gold ornaments. This is especially reflected in the various festivals and dances.

It is interesting to find that the God worshipped by the Khasi-Jaintia was never represented physically but was worshipped in different forms as spirits. Sacrifices were not performed to offer tribute to God; rather the rituals were done to appease spirits and deities.⁵² On the other hand, the style of worship was simple and it revealed the closeness of the Khasi-Jaintia with nature. It is also imperative to note that the erection of monoliths explained the reverence of the ancestors was practiced by the people. For the Khasi-Jaintia apparently, the fear of evil spirits such as *U Thlen* and *Ka Taro* etc. was greater than their fear of God. Appeasement and sacrifices was mostly done to propitiate the mercy of these spirits, while prayers to God were done only during festivals. Since there was no organized priesthood, the emergence of *Lyngdoh* as a priest may have occurred in the process of state formation.⁵³ His role as a priest, medicine man, adviser and counsellor earned him a prominent position in the Khasi-Jaintia society prior to the coming of the British and Christianity into the hills. Thus the Khasi-Jaintia society during the pre-British and the pre-Christian period had well developed socio-cultural life and political institutions.

Early contact of the Khasi-Jaintia people with the British

Khasi-Jaintia Hills had their first contact with the British Colonial power in the second half of the eighteenth century. It was so because the trade and raid was the established practice of the hill tribe with the neighbouring plains. The British considered it as a threat to their sovereignty especially after the Regulating Act of

⁵² Riewphona Mawblei, *An Understanding of Salvation in Khasi Religion and its Implications for Christian Theology*, n.p., 2014, p.14.

⁵³ For details see, Homiwell Lyngdoh, *Ka Pomblang Nongkrem Ki Mawbyinna Ki Jait Syiem bad Jait Lyngdoh Shad Nongkrem*, Desmond P. Reade Diengdoh, 5th edition, Shillong, 2003; Soumen Sen, *Social and State Formations in Khasi and Jaintia Hills*, B. R. Pub. Corp., Delhi, 1985.

1773. An expedition under Major Henniker (1774) was dispatched against the Raja of Jaintia,⁵⁴ supposedly as a result of the frequent raids by the Khasi-Jaintia to the plains of present day Bangladesh.⁵⁵ This may have been confined to those states which had commercial relations with the merchants of the British East India Company in the Sylhet district of Bengal.⁵⁶ Prior to the Anglo- Burmese War of 1824-26, there was no intervention by the English East India Company in the hill areas.⁵⁷ In the meantime, with the passage of the Charter Act of 1813, allowing Christian missionaries to work in India, it broke the indifference of the British Parliament towards them.⁵⁸ In the same year route for Christianity was opened to Khasi-Jaintia Hills with the arrival of Krishna Chandra Pal at Pandua.

CHRISTIAN MISSIONS IN KHASI-JAINTIA HILLS

Serampore Baptist Mission - The entry of Western Missionaries into the Khasi-Jaintia Hills began with the Serampore Baptist Mission in 1813. Krishna Chandra Pal, the first convert of the Mission⁵⁹ of William Carey became the first missionary to the Khasi-Jaintia.⁶⁰ He spent eight months at Pandua.⁶¹ Seven people, including two Khasi men, Duwan and Anna were baptized by Pal in the river Kushiara (near Sylhet).⁶² The two Khasi baptized were the earliest known converts among the Khasi. Pal came up to Khasi Hills and preached near the monolith at Mawsmi.⁶³ After the departure of Pal from the Khasi Hills in 1814,⁶⁴ Carey

⁵⁴ John Hughes Morris, *The History of the Welsh Calvinistic Methodists' Foreign Mission, to the end of the year 1904*, Indus Publishing Company, New Delhi, 1996, p.51.

⁵⁵ Captain Fisher, "Memoirs of Sylhet, Kachar, and Adjacent Districts", *The Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Vol.IX, No.104, July-September 1840, p.841.

⁵⁶ P. N. Dutta, *op.cit.*, p.28.

⁵⁷ D. R. Syiemlied, "British Policy Towards the Khasi States", in J. B. Bhattacharjee, *Studies in the History of North-East India*, North-Eastern Hill University Publications, 1986, p.186. For other details see Helen Giri, *Khasi under British Rule, 1824-1947*, Akashi Book Depot, Shillong, 1990.

⁵⁸ Meena Sharma Barkataki, *British Administration in North East India 1826-1874 A.D.*, first published 1985, Spectrum Publications, Guwahati: Delhi, 2011, p.90.

⁵⁹ Kanti Prasana Sen Gupta, *The Christian Missionaries in Bengal, 1793-1833*, Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyay, Calcutta, 1971, p.143.

⁶⁰ Nalini Natarajan, *The Missionary among the Khasis*, *op.cit.*, p.60.

⁶¹ It was a trade centre which was under the protection of the British but belonged to the Syiemship (Chieftainship) of Cherrapunji. Frederick S. Downs, *History of Christianity in India, Vol.V, Part 5, North East India in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, The Church History Association of India, Bangalore, 1992, p.66.

⁶² It was said that the baptism was done in the presence of eight southern Khasi chiefs and a large crowd. Nalini Natarajan, *op.cit.*, p.60.

⁶³ Mawsmi was a trading centre and headquarter of the Syiems of Mawsmi. As cited in *ibid.*, p.60.

appointed a pundit⁶⁵ for the purpose of translating the Bible into Khasi.⁶⁶ 500 copies of the New Testament of the *Bible* in Khasi language were brought out in 1824 using Bengali script.⁶⁷ However, the mission work could not spread to other parts of Khasi Hills until the later part of 1832 when the Serampore mission sent Alexander Lish to Cherrapunji. Lish prepared two books and opened schools at Cherrapunji, Mawsmait and Mawmluh in which the total number of pupils in the schools was reported to be thirty six.⁶⁸ The progress was very slow and after six years the teachers left the school followed by Lish himself.⁶⁹ The Cherra mission was abandoned and the work started by Pal came to a standstill.

Presbyterian Church - The Welsh Calvinistic Methodist Mission, later known as the Presbyterian Church, was able to lay a firm base of Christianity in Khasi hills from 1841 onwards.⁷⁰ The first missionary, Thomas Jones arrived at Cherrapunji on 2nd June 1841.⁷¹ Before Thomas Jones departure for Khasi Hills, John Mack of Serampore handed Jones all the documents containing the translation of Khasi in Bengali script.⁷² Subsequently when he arrived, he found that the Bengali script was difficult for the Khasi to read and write. Therefore, he decided to adopt the Roman alphabet to Khasi, giving it a phonetic structure by reassigning the sounds represented by various letters and thus began the preparation of a permanent script which suited the Khasi language. Thomas Jones was determined to learn the Khasi language first and write books so that the Khasi could read and write in their own language.⁷³

⁶⁴ O. L. Snaitang, *A Dictionary of Khasi Literature*, P. Khongmen, Shillong, 2011, p.96.

⁶⁵ The identity of the pundit is not known.

⁶⁶ See O. L. Snaitang, "William Carey and the Church in Northeast India", in J. T. K. Daniel & R. E. Hedlund (eds.), *Carey's Obligation and India's Renaissance*, Council of Serampore College, Serampore, 1993, pp.89-95.

⁶⁷ Frederick S. Downs, *op.cit.*, p.66.

⁶⁸ Nalini Natarajan, *op.cit.*, p.62.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p.62.

⁷⁰ When the Welsh Church in 1840 decided to start a foreign mission work, Jacob Tomlin, a former missionary of London Missionary Society who had spent nine months in 1837 in the Khasi hills suggested commencement of evangelical work in the Khasi Hills. The society accepted the suggestion partly due to political stability in the proposed area and also it coincides with the decision of the Baptist Mission to abandon their works in the Khasi fields. For details see, Lal Dena, *Christian Mission and Colonialism*, Vendrame Institute Shillong, Shillong, 1988, p.27.

⁷¹ For more information on Thomas Jones, see H. E. Marbaniang, *Ka History Lyngkot U Thomas Jones I: U Kpa ka Alphabet Khasi 1810-1849*, published by the author, Shillong, 2009.

⁷² Nigel Jenkins, *Gwalia in Khasia*, Gomer Press, Dyfed, 1995, p.69.

⁷³ Patricia Grimshaw and Andrew May (eds.), *Missionaries, Indigenous Peoples and Cultural Exchange*, Sussex Academic Press, Brighton, 2010, p.81.

Thomas Jones mastered the Khasi language within eight months. For the purpose of perfection of the language, he spent time with people of Cherrapunji by visiting their homes, in markets, asking questions and making his notes.⁷⁴ Thomas Jones was assisted by Duwan Rai and Jungkha, two pupils of Lish, who helped him in translation works. Thus Thomas Jones earned his title ‘the father of Khasi alphabet’, and till date the Cherra dialect became the language of the Khasi-Jaintia both in communication and in written form.⁷⁵

Two Khasi, Amor and Rejon⁷⁶ were the first converts of the Welsh mission baptized by William Lewis on 8th March 1846 in Nongsawlia.⁷⁷ The first organised church was established in 1846.⁷⁸ It was here that Nabon, the first Khasi woman convert was also baptized in 1848.⁷⁹ The progress of work was very slow in the initial years, though schools were established in five neighbouring villages. The first primary school in Jaintia Hills was established by Daniel Morton Sykes at Jowai in 1854 and a church was started in 1858.⁸⁰ In 1887 the Girls’ School (present Khasi-Jaintia Presbyterian Higher Secondary School) was established at Shillong.⁸¹ In 1878 Dr. Griffiths arrived from Wales and opened a small dispensary at Mawphlang which was transferred to Cherra in 1891. Dr. A. D. Hughes started the medical centre at Jowai in 1887.⁸² Eventually, the medical mission achieved recognition with the arrival of Dr. H. G. Roberts in 1913. It was in 1922, that the first hospital (present Dr. H.

⁷⁴ D. Ben Rees (ed.), *Vehicles of Grace and Hope: Welsh Missionaries in India, 1800-1970*, Modern Welsh Publications Ltd., Liverpool, 2003, p.101.

⁷⁵ See Nalini Natarajan, *op.cit.*, p.63; Also see Frederick S. Downs, *op.cit.*, p.68. For more details on the Khasi script and literature see, Hamlet Bareh, *A Short History of Khasi Literature*, published by the author, Shillong, 1969; Maurice G. Lyngoh, *Ka Thymmei Jingtíp Shaphang Ka Thoh Ka Tar Khasi*, published by the author, Shillong, 1981; R. S. Lyngdoh, *Ka History Ka Thoh Ka Tar: Naduh Basdang Haduh U Dr. John Roberts Bynta I*, second edition, K. M. Lyngdoh Nongbri, Shillong, 1995; M. Morton Roy Nongrum, *Ka Thoh Kot Thoh Sla: Naduh Ka Snem 1841 Haduh Ka Snem 1960*, published by the author, Shillong, 2000.

⁷⁶ Nalini Natarajan, *op.cit.*, p.64.

⁷⁷ J. Hughes Morris, *Christ’s Ambassadors in Khasia*, Foreign Mission of the Presbyterian Church of Wales, Liverpool, 1939, p.17.

⁷⁸ Amena Passah, “The Work of the Welsh Presbyterian Mission 1843-1969”, (unpublished) Ph. D. Thesis, NEHU, Shillong, 2005.

⁷⁹ Nalini Natarajan, *op.cit.*, p.64.

⁸⁰ *Gazetteer of India: Meghalaya District Gazetteer: Jaintia Hills*, *op.cit.*, pp.180-182.. Also see Shobhan N. Lamare, *op.cit.*, pp.83-83.

⁸¹ J. F. Jyrwa, *The Wondrous Works of God: A Study on the Growth and Development of the Khasi-Jaintia Presbyterian Church in the 20th Century*, Published by B.C. Jyrwa, Shillong, 1980, p.63.

⁸² O. L. Snaitang, “Christian Medical Mission in North-East India”, *Man and Society*, Vol. VII, 2010, p.8.

Gordon Roberts Hospital) was established in Shillong.⁸³ After the missionaries left in 1969, the management of the church was taken over by the indigenous leaders.⁸⁴ It was reported that that till 1973, the Presbyterian Church was able to establish 520 Primary schools, 22 Middle English schools, 8 High schools and 1 college.⁸⁵

Anglican Church - The Anglican Church was established in the Khasi hills in 1877.⁸⁶ It is clear that being the church of the religious order of the ruling class at that time, it received a great deal of support from the government. However, its evangelical work among the local population was on a limited scale.⁸⁷ S. B. Taylor and his wife established the Pine Mount School on 20th February 1881.⁸⁸ Ellen Hughes, a Welsh Presbyterian was the first headmistress.⁸⁹ The earlier chaplains were Europeans but after Independence, Indians have taken over the work. The All Saints' Diocesan school was opened in Shillong in 1970 which is located in the same compound of the Church.

Roman Catholic Church - The Roman Catholic Church in the Khasi Hills began with the arrival of Otto Hopfenmueller in Shillong along with four Salvatorians in February 1890.⁹⁰ In 1891, the first Khasi Catholic was baptized and the following year a station was opened at Raliang in the Jaintia hills.⁹¹ Due to the outbreak of the First World War, the Salvatorians had to leave the region.⁹² It was only in 1921 that

⁸³ Amena N. Passah, "Christian Missions in the Khasi-Jaintia Hills: Health Care and Impact on the Society" in T. B. Subba, J.Puthenpurakal and S.J. Puykunnel, (eds.), *op.cit.*, pp.203-218.

⁸⁴ For more readings on the history of the Presbyterian Church see, G. Angell Jones, *Ka History Jong Ka Balang 1841-1966*, Ka Khasi-Jaintia Presbyterian Synod, Shillong, 1966; Maurice G. Lyngdoh, *Ka Histori Ka Balang Presbyterian Ri Khasi-Jaintia*, published by Bluebell Warjri, Shillong, 2000.

⁸⁵ J. F. Jyrwa, *op.cit.*, p.65.

⁸⁶ The Church belonged to the Anglican Church or Church of England (in India presently known as the Church of North India)

⁸⁷ Nalini Natarajan, *op.cit.*, pp. 77-78.

⁸⁸ Hamlet B. Ngapkynta, *The Church of England, Now The Church of North India in Bengal, Assam and Meghalaya*, Ri Khasi Book Agency, Shillong, 2009, p.178.

⁸⁹ "In July 1900, Miss Ellen Hughes was appointed by the Government as Head Mistress of the Shillong Government School for European and Eurasian children, as cited in "Great Assam (Shillong) Earthquake of 12 June 1897", Saturday, 2 February 2013, <http://yellowbaobab.blogspot.in/2013/02/great-assam-shillong-earthquake-of-12.html>, accessed on 16 July 2014. Also see, Hamlet Bareh, *Progress of Education in Meghalaya*. Cosmo Publications, New Delhi, 1996, p.187.

⁹⁰ For details see, Pascal Malngiang, *Ki Nongmait Shrah, Ki Missionary Salvatorian*, n.p., Shillong, 1984.

⁹¹ Frederick S. Downs, *op.cit.*, pp. 92-93.

⁹² Paul Lefevre accompanied by a small company of Belgian Jesuits from Bengal was entrusted with the responsibility of maintaining the work in Assam until permanent arrangements could be made.

their work was resumed by entrusting their mission work to the Salesians of Don Bosco. They occupied the old stations in the Khasi-Jaintia hills, and opened new stations, established new institutions, and resumed work in the Assam plains.⁹³

INDIGENOUS DENOMINATIONS IN KHASI-JAINTIA HILLS

While these missions were involved in evangelical and humanitarian works, there were local members who had different opinions regarding the doctrines, practices and management of the established churches while some of them were denied of occupying top posts in the church. The discontentment with their churches led them to initiate movements which propagated new interpretation of the *Bible*. Within a short period of time, these movements grew and gathered followers which resulted in the formation of new denominations in Khasi-Jaintia Hills.

Church of God - The Church of God is one of the largest indigenous churches in Meghalaya. It was founded as an independent church by Wolley Mohan Roy at Myllymbah in 1902.⁹⁴ Among its pioneers, J. J. M. Nichols Roy was prominent in spreading the movement from the time of its establishment to 1959.⁹⁵ The church has been self-supporting and is funded by the tithe, offerings and donations of the members.⁹⁶ However, from a humble beginning, the church made significant progress in the region and flourishes in many places all over Northeast India and Asia.⁹⁷

⁹³ *Ibid.*, pp.105-106. For details on the Roman Catholic Church in Khasi-Jaintia Hills see, C. Becker, *History of the Catholic Mission in North East India* (1890-1915), translated and edited by G. Stadler & S. Karotemprel, Vendrame Missiological Institute, Shillong, 1980; G. Maliekal, *History of the Catholic Mission Amongst the Khasis*, DBCIC, Shillong, 2005.

⁹⁴ The first Baptised members are mother of Ksher, mother of Mahim, Jyllun Nongkhlaw, Khor Kharlukhi and E. Dhorom Dkhar. For other details, see O. L. Snaitang, *Ka Ensaiyclopedia Ka Balang U Blei, Vol.I*, published by the author, Shillong, 2013, p.57; also Willingwellstone Diamai, *Ka History ka Balang u Blei Lyngba Kyrta haduh Mynta*, 1999. For further readings on the Church of God movement, see, O. L. Snaitang, *Asian Reformation, Western Initiative: An Introduction to the Church of God Reformation Movement*, Shrolenson Marbaniang on behalf of Asia-Pacific Church of God Conference, Shillong, 2002.

⁹⁵ See D. E. Welch, "J. J. M. Nichols-Roy", *Church of God Historian*, Vol. 10, No. 1, 2009, p.4. for details on the life and works of J. J. M. Nichols-Roy, see, O. L. Snaitang, *Ka Biography U Rev. J. J. M. Nichols-Roy (June 12, 1884 – November 1, 1959)*, Rev. M. W. Laloo for the Church of God Business Association, Meghalaya & Assam, 1993. Also O. L. Snaitang, *Rev. J. J. M. Nichols Roy and National Integration*, El Sawkmie Group of Publication, Shillong, 2009.

⁹⁶ Nalini Nataranjan, *op.cit.*, p.82.

⁹⁷ It has mission centers and churches in different parts of West Bengal, Orissa, and Andaman & Nicobar Island and expanded to Nepal, Bangladesh, and Srilanka as well. O. L. Snaitang (ed.), *Churches of Indigenous Origins in Northeast India*, Mylapore Institute for Indigenous Studies, Delhi,

Other indigenous denominations - Other indigenous denominations were also established in Khasi and Jaintia Hills some of which emerged out of the Presbyterian Church while others from the Church of God. One of these denominations is the Christ National Church or *Ka Balang Trai Ri* which was formed in 1924.⁹⁸ Another church known as the Assembly Church of Jesus Christ (Full Gospel) was established in April, 1930. The Church of Jesus Christ was also started in Shillong in 1932.⁹⁹ Other denominations which have their headquarter in Shillong include the Church of God Ecclesia (1940), Turoi Gospel (1941), All in One Christ (1947) and World Victory Church (1947). At the initial stage the membership, evangelical missions, funding, infrastructure of these indigenous denominations, were relatively small, but some of them were able to draw large number of followers and strengthened their foundation. The denominations have also made considerable contribution in the field of education and social activities in the Hills.

NON-CHRISTIAN MISSIONS IN KHASI-JAINTIA HILLS

Unitarianism - The foundation of Unitarianism in the Khasi-Jaintia Hills is credited to Hajom Kissor Singh. He started the movement called, *Ka Niam Wei Blei* (The religion which worships one God). After his contact with the Brahma Samaj, he decided to break away from Christianity and established the Unitarian church in Jowai on 10th Sept 1887.¹⁰⁰ He and his wife Pharien Bon were the first adherents. In 1894, American Unitarian, Jabez Thomas Sunderland visited the Khasi hills to help the movement.¹⁰¹ Though it was liberal in approach and worship, and incorporated some of the beliefs of *Ka Niam Khasi*, it was not able to attract large number of followers.

2000, pp.150-156. For details on the missions see, O. L. Snaitang, *Ka Balang U Blei ha Asia 1902-1999*, Shillong, 2000.

⁹⁸ O. L. Snaitang (ed.), *Churches of Indigenous Origins in Northeast India*, *op.cit.*, p.77.

⁹⁹ Nalini Natarajan, *op.cit.*, pp.83-84; O.L. Snaitang (ed.), *Churches of Indigenous Origins in Northeast India*, *op.cit.*, pp.40-77.

¹⁰⁰ G. P. Singh, *Historical Researches into some Aspects of the Culture and Civilization of North- East India*, Gyan Publishing House, New Delhi, 2009, p.269.

¹⁰¹ For details see B. Danibha Pyrbot, "Unitarianism in the Khasi-Jaintia hills 1887-1995", (unpublished) Ph. D. Thesis, North-Eastern Hill University, Shillong, 2012.

Hinduism - The Khasi contact with Hinduism through trade relations with the plains did not have much significant effect on either the Khasi culture or religion. It might be of the reason that while communicating with the Hindu culture, the Khasi realized that the restrictions imposed in Hindu beliefs and practices whether caste or dietary are vastly different with their traditional ones.¹⁰² However, there are traces of Hindu influence in several religious and cultural aspects of the War Khasi in Shella¹⁰³ and among the Pnar of Jaintia at Nartiang.¹⁰⁴

The Brahma Samaj - The Brahma Samaj was established in Shillong on 8th November 1874.¹⁰⁵ With the help of the Brahmos from Calcutta, the Samaj extended its work to other parts of Khasi Hills.¹⁰⁶ Mission work started after Nilmani Chakraborty was appointed to educate and preach to the Khasi people in and around Shillong, and bring them into the fold of the Brahma Samaj.¹⁰⁷ Expansion of the work

¹⁰² *Gazetteer of India: Meghalaya District Gazetteer: Khasi Hills*, Directorate of Arts and Culture, Shillong, 1991, p.54.

¹⁰³ The War (sub-tribe) of the Khasi in Shella had adopted Hinduism much before the arrival of Christian missionaries. This was not abrupt, but due to the trade relations that they had with the Hindus in Sylhet, they became acquainted with the Hindu life and culture. However, many of the traditional customs were retained by the people. In the later part of the nineteenth century, Vaishnavism and Christianity spread in Shella. It was said that many locals accepted Vaishnavism and took Diksha or initiation from Vaishna Sadhus of Sunanganj in Sylhet. Animal sacrifices were performed to worship the goddess Chandi. Few of them became Brahma under the influence of Brahma Mission in Cherrapunjee. The traditional Khasi religion in Shella has become obsolete owing to the influence of Hinduism and Christianity on the people. Both clan exogamy and religious endogamy are maintained. This can be revealed in the election of the Wahadadar and some other socio-religious matters. The Ram Krishna Mission established school in 1924 and constructed a Mandir in 1930. Christianity in Shella gained popularity only after the arrival of J. J. M. Nichols Roy. See, Pranab Kumar Das Gupta, *Life and Culture of Matrilineal Tribe of Meghalaya*, Inter India Publications, New Delhi, 1984, pp.159-161.

¹⁰⁴ During the medieval period, the Jaintia kings were influenced by culture and religion of the Hindus of the plains. The advancement of the Jaintiapur Kingdom in different areas such as building of palaces, structures, flag and minting of coins can be credited as the result of this contact. The Kings adopted Hinduism as a state religion and subsequently, human sacrifices were also practice to appease the gods. Nartiang was the centre of Hindu worship, and the Hindu temple attributed to goddess *Kali* and *Shiva* was constructed. In Jaintiapur, the goddess *Kali* was worshipped along with her tribal counterparts. As Brahmanism gained ground, the Tantric cult also found its way into the life of the people who had embraced the new faith. Human sacrifices were carried out in the hills and this was mainly done during the *Durga puja*. For details see, Shobhan N. Lamare, *op.cit.*, 95.

¹⁰⁵ <http://www.thebrahmosamaj.net/samajes/shillongsamaj.html>. Accessed on 18th April 2012.

¹⁰⁶ Cherrapunji, Shella, Mustoh, Mawlong, Mawmai. For further details see, Hamlet Bareh, *Encyclopedia of North-East India: Meghalaya*, Mittal Publications, Delhi, 2001, p.173.

¹⁰⁷ Mahendra Naran Karna, *Social Movements in North-east India*, Indus Publishing Company, New Delhi, 1998, p.98.

in Shillong was made possible through the help of locals such as Radhon Sing Berry, and mainly Jeebon Roy.¹⁰⁸

The Ramakrishna Mission - The Shillong Branch of the Ramakrishna Mission was started in 1929 although Swami Vivekananda visited Shillong in 1899.¹⁰⁹ The Ramkrishna Mission School was established in Cherrapunji in 1933. In 1940 a library was opened at the Ashram premises in Shillong.¹¹⁰ The Mission renders humanitarian works and health services in Shillong and in rural areas; however its impact was not on a large scale. There were very few Khasi converts and no local leadership for the mission was initiated.¹¹¹

Islam - The Khasi had contact with the Muslims in the seventeenth century through trade relations at Sylhet. Gradually a number of Muslims visited Khasi hills and soon migrated to Shillong to settle for trade purposes. Many of them married Khasi women and from this union the existence of Khasi Muslims was made possible. The children followed Islam as their religion but could not escape from matrilineal lineages. There was some influence of Muslim art in cemetery structure of Khasi chiefs.¹¹² However, the decorations of the *Rots* (tall rectangular frames made of bamboo or wood) that are used during the *Behdeinkhlam* are said to have been borrowed from the Muslims of the plains.¹¹³ We also see traces of Muslim influence in the dresses used in the dance festivals of some areas of Jaintia Hills particularly on the southern slopes bordering Sylhet district of present Bangladesh.¹¹⁴ The Shillong Muslim Union was formed in 1905 was founded by Khan Bahadur Amjad Ali with the aim of catering the religious, socio-cultural needs of Muslims in erstwhile East Bengal.

¹⁰⁸ For details see, Dipankar Banerjee, *Brahmo Samaj and North-East India*, Anamika Publishers & Distributers Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 2006.

¹⁰⁹ Hamlet Bareh, *Encyclopaedia of North-East India: Meghalaya*, *op.cit.*, p.176.

¹¹⁰ <http://www.rkmshillong.org/The%20Making.html>, Accessed on 12th January 2014.

¹¹¹ For details on the Mission see V. S. Lalrinawma, *The Work of Ramakrishna Mission in Meghalaya: A Study of the East Khasi Hills District*, ISPCK, New Delhi, 2012.

¹¹² A. N. M. Irshad Ali, "Influence of Islam on some Tribal Societies in North East India", in Tamo Mibang and M. C. Behera (eds.), *Tribal Studies-Emerging Frontiers of Knowledge*, Mittal Publications, New Delhi, 2002, pp.87-90.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 95.

¹¹⁴ R. T. Rymbai, "Christian missions and the Indigenous Religion of the Khasi Pnar", *op.cit.*, pp.68-102.

Buddhism - Buddhism made its mark in the Khasi hills in 1918. The Shillong Branch of Buddha Dharmankur Sabha of Kolkata was established in 1923. The construction of the temple started in 1925 and was formally inaugurated in 1947.¹¹⁵

Sikhism - Sikhism in Khasi hills was confined only to the Sikh community. Though there were inter marriages between Sikh and Khasi but no significant impact was felt in the hills. There are few Gurudwaras and Valmiki temples in Shillong.¹¹⁶

Since the doctrines of Unitarianism contrasted the beliefs of Christianity on the divinity of Jesus Christ, hence it may be regarded as a non-Christian movement. In addition, the reason as to why the followers of *Ka Niam Tre* do not take beef is mainly due to the influence of Hinduism. Another influence can also be witnessed in the use of Indian classical instrument such as the *tabla* and the *harmonium*.¹¹⁷ Other major religions have less influence on the Khasi-Jaintia. However, we can point out the fact that though the impact of non-Christian missions on the Khasi-Jaintia was less in comparison to that of Christianity, nevertheless, these missions have also contributed considerably to the socio-cultural and religious sphere of the tribes.

The era of change that swept the socio-cultural and political life of the Khasi-Jaintia, started not only due to the efforts of the missionaries but also to the contribution of the indigenous people cannot be ruled out too. In the society some accepted the change others made efforts to counter the same. All these can be studied from the perspective of ‘exposure and response syndrome’ and or ‘adoption and reaction’ phenomena. A relook on these changes will throw light on the condition of Khasi-Jaintia society on the eve of the inception of the SDA in the Hills. This aspect is discussed below.

¹¹⁵ M. L. Kynshi, R. E. Lyngdoh and Aibanbhalang, “A Plaque with the Date of Establishment of the Shillong Buddhist Temple”, <http://www.easternpanorama.in/index.php/2011/92-2012/june6/2008-the-history-of-shillongs-buddhist-temple>, accessed on 14th March 2012.

¹¹⁶ Hamlet Bareh, *Encyclopedia of North East India: Meghalaya, op.cit.*, p.164; for more details also see, Himadri Banerjee, “The Other Sikhs the Sikhs of Shillong, 1897-1996”, in Pashaura Singh (ed.), *Sikhism in Global Context*, Oxford University Press, London, 2011, pp.185-202.

¹¹⁷ Hamlet Bareh, *Encyclopedia of North East India: Meghalaya, op.cit.*, p.95.

SOCIAL CHANGE AMONG THE KHASI-JAINTIA PRIOR THE SDA

In the second half of the nineteenth century, missionaries in the West had to face challenges to Christian beliefs which were the outcome of the growth of scientific knowledge and especially Charles Darwin's theory of human evolution.¹¹⁸ This however inspired them to adopt various measures to spread Christianity. The new methods were not confined to the Western countries only. One of the methods was the formation of foreign missions to countries in Asia and Africa, some of these entered the Khasi-Jaintia Hills. However, it took some time for the people to accept an alien faith.

In the early years of the work of the Christian missions, there was opposition to attendance in schools as well as conversion by the Khasi-Jaintia. As a result, there was a slow pace in the expansion of Christianity in the Khasi-Jaintia Hills. Girls were barred by their family to attend schools. This was followed by opposition against the refusal of young pupils to join their family religious rituals.¹¹⁹ Opposition against conversion to Christianity was not confined to common people. Even converts belonging to ruling clans were also targeted.¹²⁰ The low rate of conversion in the nineteenth century was due to the injunctions of the need for adherence to strict rules and regulations on the entry of membership as was seen by the Presbyterian Church. It was decided that a person cannot be accepted as a full member of the Church if one could not read, renounce traditional practices and abstain from all kinds of intoxicants.¹²¹ To meet the needs of the Khasi for knowing English and imparting value education, more schools were established. Soon, the causes of prohibition against girls to attend schools proved baseless and led to increase in female education.¹²²

The 500 copies of translated Khasi Bibles at the initiative of Carey were futile since many among the common people did not possess knowledge of Bengali

¹¹⁸ Clive Whitehead, "The Christian Missions and the origins of the Indian Education Commission, 1882-83", *Education Research and Perspectives*, Vol. 31, No. 2, 2004, p.124.

¹¹⁹ Nalini Natarajan, *op.cit.*, pp.64-65 and pp.116-117.

¹²⁰ Borsing, the heir to the *Syiemship* of Cherrapunji lost his title and property when he refused to renounce Christianity. See, Frederick S. Downs, *op.cit.*, p.73.

¹²¹ John Hughes Morris, *The History of the Welsh Calvinistic Methodists' Foreign Mission, to the end of the year 1904*, *op.cit.*, pp.192-211.

¹²² *Gazetteer of India: Meghalaya District Gazetteer: Jaintia Hills*, *op.cit.*, p.182.

script.¹²³ The use of Bengali in communicating and written form was strictly limited to the ruling class and business persons.¹²⁴ Eventually, both the elite and the common people accepted the use of Roman script and thus Khasi language was put in its written form. This enabled the Khasi-Jaintia not to read only the *Bible*, but also to explore Western literature, ideas and values too. However, the contribution of the Serampore mission cannot be ignored. The pupils of Lish helped Thomas Jones in translation works and framing of the Khasi scripts.¹²⁵ It was through this endeavor of inventing script for the Khasi that the continuity between Serampore and Welsh Presbyterian mission was witnessed. It is very interesting to note that the adoption of Cherra dialect by Thomas Jones was accepted by people from other parts of Khasi-Jaintia Hills. Neither, the Salvatorian missionaries nor the Khasi renaissance intellectuals think otherwise.¹²⁶ Thus with the first foundation laid by Thomas Jones, the way was paved for the works of subsequent missions.

The matrilineal system of the Khasi-Jaintia may have certainly surprised the early Christian missionaries when they first came into contact with the people. They saw that despite being surrounded by patriarchal societies, matrilineal system was deeply rooted in the culture of the Khasi-Jaintia and hence they decided not to interfere with the system.¹²⁷ However, difficulties arose when the position of *Ka Khadduh* who converted to Christianity was hampered with the problems of maladjustment.¹²⁸

Mawrie is of the opinion that the position of *U Kni* in Khasi-Jaintia society declined with the coming of Christianity.¹²⁹ This can be relooked from another perspective. With the passage of time, there were also some changes in marital affairs. Gradually, people started to migrate to urban locations and searched for employment in different government department and agencies. People utilized new economic

¹²³ O. L. Snaitang, *A Dictionary of Khasi Literature*, *op.cit.*, p.20.

¹²⁴ O. L. Snaitang, *Christianity and Social Change in North East India*, Vendrame, Shillong, 1993, p.122.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, p.97.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, p.78.

¹²⁷ O. L. Snaitang, "The Impact of Christianity on the Khasi-Jaintia Matrilineal Family", in P. Chacko (ed.), *Matriliney in Meghalaya*, Regency Publication, New Delhi, 1998, p.67.

¹²⁸ This aspect is discussed at length in Keith Cantlie, *Notes on Khasi Law*, Reprinted, Ri Khasi Press, Shillong, 1934.

¹²⁹ For details, see Barnes L. Mawrie, *From Maternal Uncle to Father, An Anthropological Study on Changing Patriarchy among the Khasis*, Vendrame Institute Publications, Shillong, 2015, pp.139-140.

avenues too. All these contributed to the change in the traditional joint family system and emergence of nuclear families. Men left their homes and settled in distanced areas which made them impossible to look into the affairs of their kin from time to time.¹³⁰ The missionaries also discouraged the matrilocality residence of the Jaintia male. Husbands were advised to live with their wives and to give the earnings to their children and maintenance of the family.¹³¹ Ultimately, converts discontinued the practice of having *tnga tuh* and also marriage to younger sister in law was soon seemed inappropriate.

With the passage of time, urbanization promoted many trading centers and towns, and market economy replaced the traditional economy. The Khasi-Jaintia swiftly adopted western models in their dress, professions, food habits, and even adopted western names for their children. The disposal of the dead changed abruptly, the corpse was not cremated but the Christian burial tradition was followed by many. The erection of monoliths came to a standstill and was soon disregarded.

The change in Khasi-Jaintia Hills can further be seen in the shift of the position of *Lyngdoh*. Since the belief in divination among the people had also declined, there was a noticeable lack of respect shown to the authority of the *Lyngdoh*. It was soon an accepted practice that some *Lyngdoh* who had converted to Christianity would look only after the administrative affairs sans religious affairs. As a result of the introduction of the Western medicine by the Christian medical missions, the position of the *Lyngdoh* as a traditional healer also greatly declined.¹³² The converted Khasi-Jaintia had no objections to receive vaccination and preferred Western medicine. In addition, Christian medical missionaries provided medical assistance to those who were suffering from accidents and epidemics (cholera, leprosy, small pox, chicken pox etc.) and changed the perception of the people who had earlier seen these types of diseases as curse or related to demons.¹³³ The concept of sanctification of the sacred groves was not acceptable to the missionaries since it

¹³⁰ For details see Amena Passah, "Matriliney in Meghalaya : At the Crossroads?- Some Insights", in Mignonette Momin, *Readings in History and Culture of the Garos: Essays in Honour of Milton S. Sangma*, Regency Publications, New Delhi, 2003, p.187. For further readings see, Celine Augustine, *Matriliney in Transition: A Comparative Analysis*, Akansha Publishing House, New Delhi, 2007.

¹³¹ For details see, R. T. Rymbai, "Certain Customs of the Pnars and their Changing Patterns", *Khasi Heritage*, Seng Khasi, Shillong, 1979, pp.75-90.

¹³² P. N. Dutta, *op.cit.*, p.198.

¹³³ O. L. Snaitang, *Nangno U Khasi U Wan*, Ri Khasi Book Agency, Shillong, 2014, pp.87-88.

was regarded as a form of superstition. Hence, people were encouraged to discard such beliefs, and in the process, the role of a *Lyngdoh* in performing rituals in these groves also gradually diminished.¹³⁴

In the case of the traditional political institutions, the effect can be witnessed in terms of the declining power of the chiefs in Khasi-Jaintia Hills. In Khasi Hills, succession in *Syiemship* was recognized only through the issuance of the *Sanad* of appointment by the Government. While in the Jaintia Hills, though the *Doloi* were allowed to continue in their office, there were considerable restrictions on them. The kingship of Jaintia Raja was abolished by the British authorities.¹³⁵

In the wake of these developments, the resistance of the Khasi-Jaintia against Christianity and the colonial government went hand in hand. They seemed to have equated Christianity with British rule. The progress of Christianity was considered a threat to the traditional culture of the Khasi-Jaintia and with the vast number of conversion to Christianity; it was thought that the indigenous religion would be totally extinct. The government was seen as the intruder which tried to manipulate the political institution of the Khasi-Jaintia.¹³⁶ The resentment of the people erupted in the form of Jaintia Rebellion that took place in the beginning of 1860.¹³⁷

In the last part of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century, to counter the colonial and Christian claims, the Khasi-Jaintia intellectuals promoted literary activities to a considerable extent. A number of publications came out in English and vernacular.¹³⁸ As a result of this literary awakening, an

¹³⁴ S. D. Talukdar, *Khasi Cultural Resistance to Colonialism*, Spectrum Publications, Guwahati. 2004, pp. 62-63.

¹³⁵ Frederick S. Downs, "Faith and Lifestyle: How Christianity was Understood by the 19th Century Converts in North East India", in M. S. Sangma and D. R. Syiemlieh. (eds.), *Essays on Christianity in North East India*, Indus Publication Company, New Delhi, 1994, p.155, and for further details, see S. N. Lamare, *Resistance Movements in North East India: The Jaintias of Meghalaya (1860-1862)*, Regency Publications, New Delhi, 2001, p.114.

¹³⁶ J. B. Bhattacharjee, "The Messenger of Khasi Heritage", *Khasi Heritage*, Seng Khasi, Shillong, 1979, p.3.

¹³⁷ The causes of the revolt had both cultural and religious overtones. Cremation of the dead was stopped by the government and converts were asked to give up their *pujas* and other cultural traits. This was followed by strong measures taken by the government to abolish the practice of human sacrifice. P. N. Dutta, *op.cit.*, p.198. Also see, S. N. Lamare, *Resistance Movements in North East India: The Jaintias of Meghalaya (1860-1862)*, *op.cit.*

¹³⁸ Amjad Ali published the first Khasi poetry book *Ka Myntoi* in 1888 followed by U Morkha Joseph Chyne's poem *U Sierlapalang* in 1891; A Christian journal *Ka Pateng Khristan* was published in 1896.

organization parallel to the Christian church known as the Seng Khasi was formed on 23rd November 1899 at Shillong. The main aims of the organization were to safeguard and revive the traditional culture and religion.¹³⁹ A number of subsequent efforts were successfully made to provide the solidarity among followers of traditional Khasi religion. The *Shad Suk Mynsiem* (Dance of the Joyful Soul) was introduced in 1911.¹⁴⁰ This thanks-giving dance related to agricultural cycle, was organized by the Seng Khasi annually (month of April) at Weiking ground Shillong and in villages all over Khasi Hills.¹⁴¹ This development brought about the inquisitiveness to conceptualize the social formation of the Khasi in the context of religion. From 1970s onwards, the purpose of the organization laid more emphasis on religion and established a distinct socio-religious identity among the Khasi.¹⁴² With the changes in the perception of the Seng Khasi, new elements of the concept of *Ka Niam Khasi* emerged. The rooster¹⁴³ became symbol of the Seng Khasi and it was placed at the centre of the Seng Khasi flag.¹⁴⁴ Buildings known as *Ing Seng* were constructed to gather the followers of Seng Khasi. Sunday was observed as a day of meetings of the Seng Khasi members. Following the *Lyngdoh*, the *Nongknia* (diviner) also gained

Another journal *U Khasi Mynta* was started in 1896 which laid emphasis on cultural aspects. Jeebon Roy published *Ka Niam jong Ki Khasi* and *Ka Kitab Nyngkong – Bengali* in 1897. Between 1898 and 1901 Roy published *Ka Hit-Upodesa Part I and Part II* (1898), *History of India in Khasi* (1900), *Ka Ramayon* (1900), *Ka Kitab Chaitanya ne U Lord Gaurang Charittra* (1900), *Ka Kitab Batai Pynshynna Shaphang U Wei U Blei* (1900) and *Buddha Deb Charittra* (1901). Others that followed him were Rash Mohon Roy, Hari Charan Roy and Sib Charan Roy whose works focused mostly on Khasi traditional religion and translation of Sanskritic stories into Khasi. U Nissor Singh Lyngdoh wrote *Ka Khasi Arithmetic I & II*, *Hints of the Study of the Khasi Language* (1900), *Khasi English Dictionary* (1906) and *English-Khasi Dictionary* (1920); The literary renaissance reached its peak with the composition of many poems by SosoTham which include the *Ki Sngi Barim U Hynniewtrep* published in 1936; other publications include *Ka Riti Jong ka Ri Laiphew Syiem Bynta I* (1936) and *Ka Riti Jong ka Ri Laiphew Syiem Bynta II* (1937) by G. Costa; *Ki Kjat Sngi* (1936), *Ki Khanatang Jong U Barim* (1937) and *Ka Pansngiat Ksiar Ki Saw Aiom* (1938) by H. Elias; Another prominent writer Homiwel Lyngdoh authored *Ki Ain Ka Jingkoit Jingkhiah* (1914), *Ka Pomblang Nongkrem bad Ka Thang Syiem Sohra* (1928), *Ka Niam Ki Khasi* (1937) and *Ki Syiem Khasi bad Synteng* (1938).

¹³⁹ Soumen Sen, “Seng Khasi and Idealization of Khasi Religion”, *Proceedings of North East India history Association* (hereafter, *PNEIHA*), Seventh session, Pasighat, 1986, p.239.

¹⁴⁰ H. Kelian Synrem, *Revivalism in Khasi Society*, Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1992, p.12.

¹⁴¹ For detail information on *Shad Suk Mynsiem* see, Seng Khasi, *Centenary Celebration, Ka Shad Suk Mynsiem 1911-2011*, Shillong, 2011.

¹⁴² S. D. Talukdar, *op.cit.*, p.89.

¹⁴³ The rooster was associated with the folktale of “Ka Krem Lamet Ka Krem Latang”. For details on this aspect, see Barnes L. Mawrie, *The Khasis and Their Natural Environment*, Vendrame Institute Publications, Shillong, 2000.

¹⁴⁴ The red flag of the Seng Khasi was raised on the 23rd November 1899. See J. B. Bhattacharjee, *op.cit.*, p.10.

importance among the adherents of traditional religion. Every year, pilgrimage is performed to the peak U Lum Sohpetbneng and an anniversary of the emergence of the Seng Khasi known as *Seng Kut Snem* is celebrated annually near Umiam Lake (Barapani) Shillong. In Jaintia Hills also, revivalism of cultural and religious elements came in the form of an organization. In 1947, *Ka Seinraj* (organization of an area) was formed at Jowai.¹⁴⁵ Its objective is to preserve, protect and revive traditional culture and indigenous religion of the Jaintia. The *Behdeinkhlam* festival was restored after a lapse of 18 years.¹⁴⁶

To conclude, the Khasi-Jaintia society witnessed a significant change due to the colonial intervention and Christian and non-Christian missions and faiths. Shillong remained the political headquarter of the British rule during the British period and even after India's independence. In the twentieth century it was this political prominence which attracted various missionaries, education and health missions and various other efforts which on one hand ushered in an era of transition in society, on the other as a reaction to the same, a sort of revivalism of traditional faith began too. Whether the latter had the anti-colonial nationalist feeling, or to counter the expansion of Christianity and the consequent decline of traditional faith and institutions, could perhaps be looked into by other interested scholars.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

General works on Christianity, have been undertaken from a mission perspective¹⁴⁷ and very little was dedicated towards the indigenous people. Again, no church exists in isolation. The establishment and growth of a church may come as a need of the society or the need of a church to expand. The missionaries may come to preach Christianity, but unless the people themselves accept the faith and propagate it through various means, the work of the missionaries would thus be in vain. This perspective falls in line with the guidelines of the Church History Association of India

¹⁴⁵ It was formed under the leadership of Pati Laloo, Pati Ryngad, Sahan Lanong, Harison Kyndiah, Wikin Shullai, Kistobin Rymbai and others. See, J. F. Jyrwa, *Christinity in Khasi Culture*, published by Mrs. B. Jyrwa, Shillong, 2011, p.158.

¹⁴⁶ Gracefulness Bonney, "Traditional Religion of the Jaintia of Meghalaya", in Lalrinnunga Hmar (ed.), *Religion, Beliefs and Practices in North-East India*, Mittal Publications, New Delhi, 2013, p.272.

¹⁴⁷ Frederick S. Downs, "Historiographical issues in the Study of Christianity in North-East India", in M. S. Sangma and D. R. Syiemlieh (eds.), *Essays on Christianity in North East India*, Indus Publishing House, New Delhi, 1994, p. 15.

(CHAI), of which one of its directions was to replace the ‘sending’ perspective by the ‘coming perspective’.¹⁴⁸

In order to gain a wider perspective of Christianity in northeast India, all denominations, regardless of the size in number of followers or the duration of their existence has to be considered for study. However, studies on the expansion of Christianity and the works on the Church histories in the Khasi-Jaintia Hills have mostly focused on the dominant churches.¹⁴⁹ Very few studies have been done on minor Churches that were established in these hills and SDA is one of them. However no historical study on the SDA in Khasi-Jaintia Hills has been done so far and this study has been an attempt to fill in the gap area. Hence, this study tries to fill in the gap to the long awaited comprehensive historiography of Christianity in northeast India. The study is not only the study of the Church but the ramification as seen in its interaction with the Khasi-Jaintia society and its considerable influence on many areas of the society. The study begins from 1913 when the Adventists set foot in the Khasi-Jaintia Hills and closes in 1998 when the SDA in Khasi-Jaintia Hills took final shape being designated as Khasi-Jaintia Conference of the Seventh-day Adventists.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

For a very long time, history writing has been generally dominated mostly by political history. Gradually, there was a shift of focus into other areas as well. As E. H. Carr pointed out “the economic and social interpretation of history may be said to represent a more advanced stage in history than the exclusively political interpretation. The old interpretation is not rejected but is both included and superseded in the new”.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁸ “These perspectives mean the study starts with India and then go on to study the impact upon the Indian people of the missionaries who came among them from abroad.” See, Frederick S. Downs, “Historiographical issues in the Study of Christianity in North-East India”, *op.cit.*, p.18.

¹⁴⁹ See, C. B. Firth, *An Introduction to Indian Church History*, ISPCK Publishers and Distributors, Delhi, 2013; F. S. Downs, *The Mighty Works of God: A Brief History of the Council of Baptist Churches in North East India: The Mission Period 1836 – 1950*, The Christian Literature Centre, Gauhati, 1971; J. F. Jyrwa, *The Wondrous Works of God: A Study on the Growth and Development of the Khasi-Jaintia Presbyterian Church in the 20th century*, published by B. C. Jyrwa, Shillong, 1980; O. Paviotti, *The Work of His hands : The story of the Archdiocese of Shillong-Guwahati*, Archbishop's House, Shillong, 1987; D. R. Syiemlieh, *A Brief History of the Catholic Church in Nagaland*, Vendrame Institute Publications, Shillong, 1990.

¹⁵⁰ E. H. Carr, *What is History*, first published 1961, Penguin Books, London, 1990, p.124.

In this connection, religious studies can also provide enough evidences, sources and supports to the history of a generation or a community, and as such religious studies stays in the same fray with mainline history. In our case, Christianity can be attributed to such a role that has profound determinism on the livelihood (ways of living) of the people. Since both the elite and the common people partake in the same affiliation of a common platform i.e. religion or a church in Christianity,¹⁵¹ hence church history may be clubbed as part of social history. This can be further explained in the opinion of James Hastings Nichols: “Enlightened history and church history thus alike repudiated fatalistic and cyclical theories of the human process; they testified to real change and new creation in history, a process, moreover, involving all mankind, culminating at specifiable points, and triumphing in a future yet to come. Individual personality likewise takes on new dimensions in church history and in its secular pupil.”¹⁵² However, despite this claim it was only recently that Christian history has been written as part of Indian social history.¹⁵³ Especially in the field of cultural aspects, the establishment of a church has largely contributed to social change and brought both positive and negative effects to the traditional society.

Marc Bloch observed “Christianity is a religion of historians and the concerns of the historian must be as comprehensive as the history of the human race”.¹⁵⁴ History of Christian thought, philosophy of a particular denomination and organization of church principles is still a broader field of inquiry which can be looked at beyond theology.¹⁵⁵ Church history is an aid to understanding the past and the present since the history of mankind will never be completed without including in it the beliefs and practices. While studying the history of a church, one has to remember that studies can be made not only from a single perspective. Socio-cultural, economic and political aspects are also important to get a wider glance into the historicity of a church history. Through the interaction of the church with its

¹⁵¹ Eerdmans Brill, *Encyclopedia of Christianity*, Vol.5, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Michigan, 2008, p.70.

¹⁵² James Hastings Nichols, “Church History and Secular History”, *Church History*, Vol. 13, No. 2, Jun., 1944, p.93.

¹⁵³ John C. B. Webster, “Christian History as Indian Social History A Review of Literature”, in Sabyasachi Bhattacharya (ed.), *Approaches to History: Essays in Indian Historiography*, Primus Books: ICHR, New Delhi, 2011, p.160.

¹⁵⁴ Marc Bloch, *The Historian’s Craft*, Vintage Books, New York, 1953, p.67.

¹⁵⁵ James E. Bradley and Richard A. Muller, *Church History: An Introduction to Research, Reference Works, and Methods*, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1995, p.8.

surrounding culture, and the interrelationship between the doctrinal formulations and the life of the church in its historical and cultural context, the doctrinal issues become clearer.

Very often in the past, studies done on churches were mostly written from missionary and church-centered perspectives. In many instances, this led to biasness and subjectivity. Some were written purely based on theological perspective citing events and tries to reconstruct the historicity of the church. Hence a relook at the same phenomena from other angles will bring out the objectivity in writing church history. Use and selection of sources also is important for historical writing, hence in this case, many church history may contains one-sided sources, for example use of church's sources or theological sources. Sources such as those written by missionaries have to be analyzed and a comparative studies or interpretation can be done by interaction with the members of a concerned church or denomination. However, the propagation of the church through missions cannot be ignored but in other sense, the political elements involve relations between the church and the state/secular environment also is important. In addition, church sources can be corroborated by the use of archival materials and other secular documents.

In the past, some of the church histories in India were written with an objective to gain support for missionary works. As such, exaggeration and misinterpretation of facts cannot be ignored. By highlighting the difficulties and challenges of the work load to provide spiritual service to the people, pleads were made to gain support both in capital and human labour.¹⁵⁶ In addition to these, general works on Christianity, missionaries and theologians also wrote a number of histories from a mission perspective.¹⁵⁷ Very often it was found that these writings concentrated mostly on missionaries and their works. Very little is dedicated towards the indigenous people. Hence it is a matter of concern to consider the fact that a passing reference or no reference at all of the contribution of the indigenous Christians may lead to subjectivity. Hence there should be a method to lead away such tendency in historical writings. The western church centered concepts have to be

¹⁵⁶ For details see, James Hough, *The History of Christianity in India from the Commencement of the Christian Era*, published by R. B. Seeley and W. Burnside, London, 1839; also see, John Kaye, *Christianity in India: An Historical Narrative*, Smith Elder and Co., London, 1859.

¹⁵⁷ Frederick S. Downs, "Historiographical issues in the Study of Christianity in North-East India", in M. S. Sangma and D. R. Syiemlieh (eds.), *Essays on Christianity in North East India, op.cit.*, p. 15.

replaced or attached with new dimension that emphasises the authentic participation of the people in the history of a church.

General works on Christianity, have been undertaken from a mission perspective¹⁵⁸ and very little was dedicated towards the indigenous people. Again, no church exists in isolation. The establishment and growth of a church may come as a need of the society or the need of a church to expand. The missionaries may come to preach Christianity, but unless the people themselves accept the faith and propagate it through various means, the work of the missionaries would thus be in vain. This perspective falls in line with the guidelines of the Church History Association of India (CHAI), of which one of its directions was to replace the 'sending' perspective by the 'coming perspective'.¹⁵⁹

This was one of the objectives of the CHAI to inculcate the involvement of church histories along with missionary accounts on writing church history from an indigenous point of view. Another purpose was to help the general public including those belonging to other religions to understand the foundation of Christianity in India irrespective of the origins from where the denominations came.¹⁶⁰ In order to get away from institutionalized based and internal kind of history, the CHAI in 1974 suggested some perspectives as the socio-cultural, the regional and the national. Drawn from these perspectives, church historians would be able to focus on the indigenous people and pay attention to different aspects of Indian Christian community. Focus also would be made on the significance of a particular region and the geographical entity of the place where a church has been established. Moreover, social, cultural, political, economic, and religious situation/condition of a particular community at the time of the establishment of a church is regarded important and in addition, changes occurred in these areas as a result of the coming of Christianity are more vital in order to understand the mindset of the people especially the converts.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

¹⁵⁹ "These perspectives mean the study starts with the India and then go on to study the impact upon the Indian people of the missionaries who came among them from abroad." *ibid.*, p.18.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p.18; for further readings see, F. S. Downs, *The Mighty Works of God: A Brief History of the Council of Baptist Churches in North East India: The Mission Period 1836-1950*, The Christian Literature Centre, Gauhati, 1971; J. F. Jyrwa, *The Wondrous Works of God: A Study on the Growth and Development of the Khasi-Jaintia Presbyterian Church in the 20th century*, *op.cit.*; O. Paviotti, *The Work of His Hands: The story of the Archdiocese of Shillong-Guwahati*, *op.cit.*; D. R. Syiemlieh, *A Brief History of the Catholic Church in Nagaland*, *op.cit.*

Another framework is the national and international contacts and connections of Indian Christians that would help historians to explore the diversities without harming national unities.¹⁶¹ Hence based on these perspectives, the CHAI attempts to adopt methods of secular historical analysis to get church history a place in the map of social history.

Several approaches can be used for the study of Christianity in India. Firstly, though as a minority group, the contribution of Christians in India to the socio-religious, cultural, political and economic developments of the country cannot be ignored. Hence a thorough study from new perspectives laid down by the CHAI would secure the rights of Indian Christians a spot in the social history of the country. Secondly, in a culturally diverse nation like India, the role of Christianity and the converts in shaping the livelihood of the people in some areas cannot be marginalized or neglected. While considering from a larger picture, Christianity in India has less impact in comparison with other foreign religions such as Islam, but in some areas, Christianity has played significant role that has transformed the society to a large extent.¹⁶²

Therefore, in order to achieve depth and balance in the study of church history, emphasis would be on the people. Interaction with the indigenous people and converts of the church or denomination may give many dimensions to the study. Secular and empirical sources may be incorporated to bring out an objective analytical approach to the study rather than depending wholly on passages from religious texts. These concepts are important vehicle to secure church history a rightful place in social history.

For a comprehensive history of Christianity, historical and analytical studies can be done on Christian missions and denominations without subjectivity. Most writers on Christianity in Khasi-Jaintia and northeast India have written about the denominations to which they belong, and this attachment, according to Manorama

¹⁶¹ Frederick S. Downs, "Historiographical issues in the Study of Christianity in North-East India", *op.cit.*, pp.18-20.

¹⁶² John C. B. Webster, *op.cit.*, pp.185-186.

Sharma may lead to a kind of bias.¹⁶³ Perhaps for the advancement of historiography of Christianity it is necessary for historians to get out of these denominational folds.

Works on Christianity in India

Many of the works done on Christianity in India do not or contain very little information on the SDA in India. K. M. George's *Christianity in India through the Centuries*,¹⁶⁴ covers the history of Christianity in India, deals with the impact of Christianity and challenges of Christianity. In this work, mention has been made regarding the origin of SDA, there was no attention given to the SDA in India. John. C. B. Webster, *Historiography of Christianity in India*¹⁶⁵ analyses the themes and concerns that have formed the historiography of Christianity over the past centuries. He, however, also fails to address the problem of the exclusion of the contribution of smaller churches to history of Christianity in India. The SDA is also missing from C. B. Firth's *An Introduction to Indian Church History*,¹⁶⁶ who provides a detailed account of Christian churches in India and northeast India upto contemporary times. Robert Eric Frykenberg's works on Christianity in India explores and enhances historical understandings of Christian communities, cultures, and institutions in India from their beginnings down to the present.¹⁶⁷ However, SDA could find only a passing reference in his writings.

Works on Christianity in northeast India

In the genre of books on Christianity in northeast India and which apparently did not cover all the Christian denominations, mention may be made of O. L. Snaitang's *Christianity and Social Change in North East India*,¹⁶⁸ which is historical in its approach and focuses on the impact of Christianity on the traditional culture of

¹⁶³ Manorama Sharma, *History and History Writing in North East India*, Regency Publication, New Delhi, 1998, pp.42-44.

¹⁶⁴ K. M. George, *Christianity in India through the Centuries*, Authentic Books, Secunderabad, 2007.

¹⁶⁵ John. C. B. Webster, *Historiography of Christianity in India*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2012.

¹⁶⁶ C. B. Firth, *op.cit.*

¹⁶⁷ Robert Eric Frykenberg, *Christianity in India: From Beginnings to the Present*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2010; edited volume by the same author include, *Christians and Missionaries in India: Cross-Cultural Communication Since 1500*, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Cambridge, 2003; and co-edited with Judith M. Brown, *Christians, Cultural Interactions and India's Religious Traditions*, Routledge, 2002.

¹⁶⁸ O. L. Snaitang, *Christianity and Social Change in North East India*, *op.cit.*

the people of northeast India. There is passing reference to the SDA. Nevertheless, this work provides valuable information about the situation prevailing in these Hills during the establishment of the SDA. In his other work *Churches of Indigenous Origins in Northeast India*,¹⁶⁹ he provides insights into the emergence of churches that took place in the first half of the twentieth century. In his article “The Impact of Christianity on the Khasi-Jaintia Matrilineal Family” he discusses the process of changes that took place among the Khasi-Jaintia people. While narrating the advent and impact of the foreign missionaries, he makes a passing reference about the SDA Church but it was evident that the focus was on the ‘much advanced Khasi-Jaintia Presbyterian Synod’ as he has mentioned.¹⁷⁰ Contributors of the edited volume *Christianity and Change in Northeast India* of T. B. Subba, J. Puthenpurakal, and S. J. Puykunnel¹⁷¹ have captured the significant role of Christianity in bringing about socio-cultural change in northeast India. However, there is no discussion on the role of the SDA in the society. Although Frederick S. Downs in his *Christianity in North East India: Historical Perspective*¹⁷² and *History of Christianity in India Vol.5 Part V*;¹⁷³ totally ignored the presence of the SDA in different parts of northeast India, even so these works will provide a substantial framework for this study. R. B. Sharma’s *History of Christian Missions: North East India Perspective*,¹⁷⁴ edited work of M. S. Sangma and D. R. Syiemlieh, *Essays on Christianity in North East India*¹⁷⁵ and Lalsangkima Pachchua’s “Church-Mission Dynamics in North East India”,¹⁷⁶ are some of the works which analyse different Christian missions, their relation with the Government and their impact on the hill societies of northeast India. Though SDA is totally out of these works, however these works are helpful in providing the reaction and response of the people and are useful for the study. It can be seen that even though the title and the theme of the above works was ‘Christianity’, all the writers

¹⁶⁹ Idem., (ed.), *Churches of Indigenous Origins in Northeast India*, *op.cit.*

¹⁷⁰ Idem., “The Impact of Christianity on the Khasi-Jaintia Matrilineal Family”, *op.cit.*

¹⁷¹ T. B. Subba, J. Puthenpurakal, S. J. Puykunnel (eds.), *Christianity and Change in Northeast India*, Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi, 2009.

¹⁷² F. S. Downs, *Christianity in North East India: Historical Perspective*, ISPCK, Delhi, 1983.

¹⁷³ Idem., *History of Christianity in India, Vol. V, Part 5, North East India in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, The Church History Association of India, Bangalore, 1992.

¹⁷⁴ R. B. Sharma, *History of Christian Missions: North East India Perspective*, Mittal Publications, New Delhi, 1988.

¹⁷⁵ M. S. Sangma and D. R. Syiemlieh (eds.), *op.cit.*

¹⁷⁶ Lalsangkima Pachchua, “Church-Mission Dynamics in North East India”, *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, Vol.27, No.4, October, 2003, pp.154-161.

focused on the dominant churches, paying scant attention to minor churches which had played significant roles to a great extent, thus making the word ‘Christianity’ a misnomer.

Works on Christianity in Khasi-Jaintia Hills

Some studies have been done on Christianity and history of Christian missions in Khasi-Jaintia Hills. These works concentrated mostly on the dominant churches only.¹⁷⁷ P. N. Dutta’s *Impact of the West on the Khasis and Jaintias*¹⁷⁸ stresses the impact of the Christian missionaries on the social, political and religious sphere of the Khasi-Jaintia. However, the book is useful to gain insight into the social, economic, political and religious condition of Khasi Jaintia Hills on the eve of the advent of the SDA. P. Kharakor’s *Biblical Influence on Pre-Independence Khasi Literature*¹⁷⁹ emphasizes the significant impact of the Christian missions on the Khasi Hills which in time was reflected on the literary works in Khasi language both by the Western and indigenous writers, through the influence they gained from the *Bible*. The little information about the SDA and its activities particularly in the field of education is beneficial for the proposed study. Nalini Natarajan’s *The Missionary among the Khasis*, is a historical study about the beginning, contribution and impact of various Christian Missions and indigenous churches in the Khasi-Jaintia Hills. However, the brief section in which she mentioned about the SDA cannot be treated as reliable information. It is so because some of the terms/ names¹⁸⁰ were wrongly written and lack of coherence in the description of the development and emergence of the SDA in the Khasi Hills. Another work which inaccurately presents facts is the edited work of F. Hrangkhuma and J. Thomas, *Christ Among the Tribals*,¹⁸¹ in which the date of the

¹⁷⁷ J. F. Jyrwa, *op.cit.*; David Reid Syiemlieh, *op.cit.*; Milton Sangma, *History of the American Baptist Mission In North-East India Vol.II*, Mittal Publications, New Delhi, 1992; G. Maliekal, *History of the Catholic Church Among the Khasis*, *op.cit.*; Amena Passah, “The Work of the Welsh Presbyterian Mission 1843-1969, (unpublished) Ph. D. Thesis, NEHU, Shillong, 2005; B. S. Sangma, *Education of Women in North East India: A Historical Study on the Presence of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians 1923-1953*, FMA Publication, Shillong, 2008.

¹⁷⁸ P. N. Dutta, *Impact of the West on the Khasis and Jaintias*, *op.cit.*

¹⁷⁹ P. Kharakor, *Biblical Influence on Pre-Independence Khasi Literature*, Scholar Publishing House (P) Ltd., New Delhi, 1997.

¹⁸⁰ Nalini Natarajan, *op.cit.*

¹⁸¹ F. Hrangkhuma and J. Thomas (eds.), *Christ Among the Tribals*, Fellowship of Indian Missiologists by SAIACS Press, Bangalore, 2007

starting of SDA mission is said to be 1950. S. D. Talukdar¹⁸² in her work mentions the organized effort made by the Khasi-Jaintia to preserve their culture and retain their identity in the midst of the works of the Christian missionaries which brought rapid changes to the Khasi society. Brief references were made about the coming of the SDA missionaries. J. F. Jyrwa's *Christianity in Khasi Culture*,¹⁸³ concentrated on the issue of inculturation of the church and its contribution to the development, transformation and enrichment of the Khasi-Jaintia culture. However the work stresses only on the Presbyterian Church. Concentrating on the impact of Christianity through literature and education on the Khasi and Jaintia society, in his *A Dictionary of Khasi Literature*,¹⁸⁴ O. L. Snaitang pointed out that these factors have helped to create a 'unified tribal community' among the tribes. He mentioned a number of churches and SDA was one of those. This study provides useful information regarding the situation prevalent in the Hills before the SDA set up their educational institutions and will contribute to the impact and change factor of the church on the Khasi and Jaintia.

Works on Contribution of Christian missions in Khasi-Jaintia Hills

Earlier studies have talked of the contributions made by various Christian missions among the Khasi-Jaintia, K. S. Lyngdoh and A. Henia¹⁸⁵ jointly gave a short account about the development of education and modernization in Jaintia Hills which is the product of the efforts of the foreign missionaries. H. K. Synrem¹⁸⁶ highlighted the influence of Christian missions and Western education on the Khasi-Jaintia people and their culture. However, some works' attention was drawn mostly to the bigger churches and smaller churches were left out of the purview of their study. Since the SDA was also one of these smaller churches hence its contributions also have not found space in earlier historical writings. Hamlet Bareh¹⁸⁷ deals thoroughly with the progress of education in Meghalaya. The work has been helpful in providing information regarding the background on the status of education in Khasi-Jaintia Hills

¹⁸² S. D. Talukdar, *Khasi Cultural Resistance to Colonialism*, Spectrum Publications, Guwahati, 2004.

¹⁸³ J. F. Jyrwa, *Christianity in Khasi Culture*, published by Mrs. B. Jyrwa, Shillong, 2011.

¹⁸⁴ O. L. Snaitang, *A Dictionary of Khasi Literature*, P. Khongmen, Shillong, 2011.

¹⁸⁵ K. S. Lyngdoh and A. Henia, "Contribution of the Missionaries towards Development of Education in Jaintia Hill area of Meghalaya", in P. M. Passah and S. Sarma (eds.), *Jaintia Hills – Meghalaya tribe: Its Environment, Land and People*, Reliance Publishing House, New Delhi, 2002.

¹⁸⁶ H. K. Synrem, *Revivalism in Khasi Society*, op.cit.

¹⁸⁷ Hamlet Bareh, *Progress of Education in Meghalaya*, Cosmo Publications, New Delhi, 1996.

in the first half of the twentieth century, which also falls under the period of the study on the SDA. Surprisingly P. Varghese¹⁸⁸ discusses only the contribution of the Roman Catholic Church in the field of education in Meghalaya giving only a cursory mention about the contribution of other missionary groups beginning from 1826 till post-Independence period. He also fails to record the contribution of the Assam Training School (presently Adventist Higher Secondary School) set up by Adventist Missionaries in 1941 was not reflected in this work. The SDA is conspicuously absent again in the research work of R. D. Warjri¹⁸⁹ who focuses on the attitude of the people, the motives of the Government, the role of the Serampore Baptist Mission and Welsh Calvinistic Methodist Foreign Missionary Society. However, there are some writings which talked about the educational institutions started by the SDA. Alicia Gatphoh in her work on the “Progress of Education in Jaintia Hills till 1985”,¹⁹⁰ provides a significantly comprehensive work including the contribution of the SDA to educate the people of the region.

Works on Christianity and Women in northeast India

With regards to the influence of Christianity on women and their role in the Church, F. S. Downs,¹⁹¹ provides an assessment of the impact of Christianity, upon the status of women among the Khasi-Jaintia. Downs was able to highlight the works of the American Baptist Mission and the Welsh Presbyterian Mission both from the mission and tribal perspective but incidentally other small denominations are not covered in his work. Nevertheless, this work provides a valuable source for a more in-depth study on the role of the wives of the missionaries and the role of the local converted women through education, evangelical and philosophical contribution with special reference to the SDA church. T. Vanlalrani, “Participation of Women in the Church: With Reference to North East India”,¹⁹² stresses on the exclusion of women from taking part in the Church’s Ministry among the different churches in northeast

¹⁸⁸ P. Varghese, *School Education in Meghalaya*, Akansha Publishing House, New Delhi, 2009.

¹⁸⁹ R. D. Warjri, “A Study on the Contribution of the Missionaries to the Development of Education in Khasi Hills for Period 1841-1969”, (unpublished) M. Ed. Dissertation, North-Eastern Hill University, Shillong, 1981.

¹⁹⁰ Alicia Gatphoh, “Progress of Education in Jaintia Hills till 1985”, (unpublished) M. Phil. Dissertation, North-Eastern Hill University, Shillong, 1988.

¹⁹¹ F. S. Downs, *The Christian Impact on the Status of Women in North East India*, NEHU Publications, Shillong, 1996.

¹⁹² T. Vanlalrani, “Participation of Women in the Church: With Reference to North East India”, in Lalneihzovi, *Changing Status of Women in North-Eastern States*. Mittal Publication, New Delhi, 2009.

India and gives valuable insights to the study. P. M. Passah's in his article "Status of Women in Jaintia Society and Culture",¹⁹³ observes that Christianity did not transform the traditional customs of matrilineal descent and inheritance and generally women were given a share of responsibilities in the church. With regards to the position of women in the SDA, Laura L. Vance's *Seventh-day Adventism in Crisis: Gender and Sectarian Change in an Emerging Religion* and Arthur N. Patrick, "The Adventist Pastor and the Ordination of Women" are important for this research work.¹⁹⁴

General works on SDA

The neglect of the SDA in the previous writings of Christianity and Christian mission histories in northeast India does not mean the negligible influence of the SDA in this region. Though the number of followers may be small, the impact of the SDA in the society and the commitment of the followers are essential for a thorough study. The distinctiveness which lies in its belief and practices and its organizational structure are equally important to be discussed. The literature on the SDA, George Knight's *A Brief History of Seventh-day Adventists*,¹⁹⁵ *The Rise of Adventism: Religion and Society in Mid-Nineteenth Century America* edited by Edwin Scott Gaustad,¹⁹⁶ Emma E. Howell's *The Great Advent Movement*,¹⁹⁷ Dorothy E. Watts's *Faith Triumphant: Inspiring Stories of God's Church; Belief and Work of Seventh-Day Adventists*,¹⁹⁸ P. Gerard Damsteegt's *Foundations of the Seventh-Day Adventist Message and Mission*,¹⁹⁹ have been useful as important secondary sources for the

¹⁹³ P. M. Passah, "Status of Women in Jaintia Society and Culture", in Soumen Sen (ed.), *Women in Meghalaya*, Daya, Delhi, 1992, p.53.

¹⁹⁴ Laura L. Vance, *Seventh-day Adventism in Crisis: Gender and Sectarian Change in an Emerging Religion*, University of Illinois Press, Illinois, 1999; Arthur N. Patrick, "The Adventist Pastor and the Ordination of Women", *Ministry*, April, 1989, pp.9-12. Also see, Rosa T. Banks, (ed.), *A Women's Place: Seventh-day Adventist Women in Church and Society*, Review and Herald, Hagerstown, 1992; Roger L. Dudley, "How Seventh-Day Adventist Lay Members View Women Pastors", *Review of Religious Research*, Vol. 38, No. 2, December, 1996, pp. 134.

¹⁹⁵ George Knight, *A Brief History of Seventh-day Adventists*, Review & Herald Publishing Association, Hagerstown, 1999.

¹⁹⁶ Edwin Scott Gaustad (ed.), *The Rise of Adventism: Religion and Society in Mid-Nineteenth Century America*, Harper and Row Publishers, New York, 1975.

¹⁹⁷ Emma E. Howell, *The Great Advent Movement*, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Department of Education, Review and Herald Publishing Assn. Takoma Park, Washington, D. C. 1935.

¹⁹⁸ Dorothy E. Watts, *Faith Triumphant: Inspiring Stories of God's Church*, Intra Church Publications, Pune, 2006;

¹⁹⁹ P. Gerard Damsteegt, *Foundations of the Seventh-Day Adventist Message and Mission*, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1977.

proposed study mainly on the origin, beliefs and works of the Seventh-day Adventists.²⁰⁰

Works on SDA in India

Gary land in his *The A to Z of the Seventh-Day Adventists*²⁰¹ provides a comprehensive history of SDA in America and around the globe. The SDA in Khasi-Jaintia could not find a spot in this works by an Adventist historian. Arthur Whitefield Spalding's volumes *Origin and History of Seventh-day Adventists*,²⁰² speaks about the beginning of SDA, its progress and development all over the world. While dwelling on India with reference to the same, it is quite a surprise to find that there is no room to mention neither for establishment nor works of the SDA in the Khasi-Jaintia hills. The book therefore contributes importantly to the study in its broad social context.

Works on SDA in Khasi-Jaintia Hills

Till date, some of the works done on SDA in Khasi-Jaintia Hills include Lionel F. Lyngdoh's work²⁰³ on history of the SDA in northeast India which contains only a brief discussion on the beginning of SDA in Khasi-Jaintia Hills. Since the focus of his study is whole of northeast India, the Khasi-Jaintia is not comprehensively studied in the same. However, the work serves as an important secondary source for the present study. Another work directly related to the SDA by K. Kharbteng²⁰⁴ directly deals with the growth of SDA in the Khasi Jaintia Hills, that too focusing upon the last decade of the twentieth century.²⁰⁵

²⁰⁰ J. Wilcox (ed.), *The Symposium on Mission and Social Action Transcripts: The Role of Social Ministry in the Seventh-day Adventist Church*, www.adventistarchives.org. Accessed on 6th September 2014.

²⁰¹ Gary land, *The A to Z of the Seventh-day Adventists*, Scarecrow Press, Lanham, Toronto, Plymouth, UK. 2009.

²⁰² Arthur Whitefield Spalding, *Origin and History of Seventh-day Adventists*, 4 Volumes, Review and Herald Publishing Association, Washington D.C., 1961-62.

²⁰³ Lionel F. Lyngdoh, "A Critical Study and Impact of the Seventh-day Adventist Mission in Northeast India", (unpublished) Ph. D Thesis, Gauhati University, Gauhati, 2000.

²⁰⁴ K. Kharbteng, "Church Growth in the Khasi-Jaintia Conference, Meghalaya, India", (unpublished) Doctoral Dissertation, Andrews University, Michigan, 2001.

²⁰⁵ The author himself has made clarification that the purpose of the study was to provide knowledge on church growth patterns and trends for the church leaders and members. See, *Ibid.*, p.1.

Critiques of SDA

Among several critics of SDA, Ronald Numbers in his *Prophetess of Health: A Study of Ellen G. White*,²⁰⁶ provide arguments against Ellen White's teachings on health. Works of Geoffrey J. Paxton, D. M. Canright, Walter R. Martin, Walter T. Rea, Anthony A. Hoekema are among many others which have been found useful for critical analyses of the SDA even relevant for our study.²⁰⁷ Several works done as a reaction against the observance of the Sabbath in Khasi-Jaintia Hills includes, H. M. Rapphap's *Ka Sabbaton bad Ka Sngi U Trai*,²⁰⁸ O. L. Snaitang's edited volume *Ka Theology U Rev. J. J. M. Nichols-Roy: Ka Sabbaton, Ka Sngi U Trai & Ka Rukom Im Khristan*,²⁰⁹ which serves as important sources of the study on doctrinal issues.

Primary sources on SDA

The primary sources related to SDA include Reports and Proceedings of the Southern Asia Division, North East Indian Union and Khasi-Jaintia Conference of the Seventh-day Adventists. The available publications published by the General Conference included periodicals and journals²¹⁰ which contain information on the beliefs, functions and mission of the SDA. Moreover, SDA offices at Pune make use of the Oriental Watchman Publishing House by publishing journals and periodicals relating to the work of the SDA in India such as *India Union Tidings* and *Eastern*

²⁰⁶ Ronald L. Numbers, *Prophetess of Health: A Study of Ellen G. White*, Harper & Row, New York, 1976.

²⁰⁷ Geoffrey J. Paxton, *The Shaking of Adventism*, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1978; D. M. Canright, *Seventh Day Adventism Renounced*, Fleming H. Revell Company, New York, 1914; Walter R. Martin, *The Truth about Seventh-day Adventism*, Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1959; Walter T. Rea, *The White Lie*, M & R Publications, California, 1982; Anthony A. Hoekema, *The Four Major Cults: Christian Science, Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormonism, Seventh-day Adventism*, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1989; Russell Earl Kelly, *Exposing Seventh-day Adventism*, second edition, Writer's Club Press, Bloomington, 2005.

²⁰⁸ H. M. Rapphap, *Ka Sabbaton bad Ka Sngi U Trai*, Second Edition, Shillong, 1967.

²⁰⁹ O. L. Snaitang (ed.), *Ka Theology U Rev. J. J. M. Nichols-Roy: Ka Sabbaton, Ka Sngi U Trai & Ka Rukom Im Khristan, Vols – III & IV*, Library of Khasi Christian Literary Classic Edition, Shillong, June 2014.

²¹⁰ *The Youth's Instructor, The Present Truth, Adventist Heritage, Adventist News, The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald, The Review and Herald, Adventist Review, Andrews University Seminary Studies, College and University Dialogue, Dialogue, Eastern Tidings, India Union Tidings, Journal of the Adventist Theological Society, The Journal of Adventist Education, Ministry, Perspective Digest, Record, Southern Asia Tidings, Spectrum, Our Times, Signs of the Times, Adventist World: The International Paper for Seventh-day Adventists, Khasi Adventist World Digest: World Journal of Seventh-day Adventist Church.*

Tidings (renamed *Southern Asia Tidings* in 1954). Also, the *Annual Statistical Reports of Seventh-day Adventist Conferences* which deals with the SDA in Southern Asia are helpful for the present study.²¹¹ The *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia* contains historical information regarding the establishment of the SDA in America, its pioneers and overall development.²¹² The *Constitution, Bylaws and Working Policy*²¹³ provide information on the functionaries of the SDA. In addition the *Seventh-day Adventists Yearbook* gives annual information on entities, and on institutions established, owned, or controlled by officially recognized Seventh-day Adventist organizations.²¹⁴ *Ki Khubor Ka Balang Basah*,²¹⁵ a periodical published bi-annually by the Khasi-Jaintia Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, contains articles concerning the latest activities of the Church. Though informative and useful for this study, this periodical also suffers from the lack of historical analysis. The beliefs and practices of the Adventists are discussed in detail in a number of publications of the SDA.²¹⁶ Besides these sources, personal collections of Adventists and non-Adventists

²¹¹ Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research, *Annual Statistical Reports of Seventh-day Adventist Conferences*.

²¹² Don E. Neufeld (ed.), *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, 2 Volumes, second revised edition, Review & Herald Publishing House, Hagerstown, 1996.

²¹³ The Southern Asia Division of Seventh-day Adventist, *Constitution, Bylaws and Working Policy*, Oriental Watchman Publishing House, Pune, 2000.

²¹⁴ *Seventh-day Adventists Year Book*, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Review & Herald Publishing Association, 1883-2013.

²¹⁵ Khasi-Jaintia Conference of Seventh-day Adventist, *Ki Khubor Ka Balang Basah*, Shillong.

²¹⁶ For details on the beliefs and practices in the SDA, see General Conference of SDA, *Church Manual of the Seventh Day Adventist*, Revised 1986; Idem., *Belief and Work of Seventh-day Adventists*, Pacific Press Publication Association, California, 1934; Idem., *Seventh-Day Adventists Answer Questions On Doctrine*, Review and Herald Publishing Association, Washington, D.C., 1957; Idem., *Working Policy of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists*, Review and Herald Publishing Association, Hagerstown, 2011; E. G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, Vol. 1-13, Battle Creek, Michigan, Published by James White, 1858; Idem., *Testimony for the Church No. 11*, Steam Press of the Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, Battle Creek, Michigan, 1867; Idem., *Great Controversy: Plus Supplementary Material*, Harvestime Books, Altamont, Tennessee, 1998; Idem., *Counsels on Diet and Foods*, The Trustees of the Ellen G. White Estate, Silver Spring, Maryland, 1938; John Nevins Andrews, *History of the Sabbath and First Day of the Week*, Steam Press of the Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, Battle Creek, Michigan, 1873; Matilda Erickson Andross, *Story of the Advent Message*, Review and Herald Publishing Association Takoma Park, Washington, D. C., 1926; Arthur Grosvenor Daniells, *The Abiding Gift of Prophecy*, Pacific Press Publishing Association Mountain View, California, 1936; Everett Dick, *Founders of the Message*, Review and Herald Publishing Association, Takoma Park, Washington, D.C.1938; Edwin Scott Gaustad (ed.), *The Rise of Adventism: Religion and Society in Mid-Nineteenth Century America*, Harper and Row Publishers, New York, 1975; Ministerial Association General Conference of SDA, *Doctrinal Discussions*, Review and Herald Publishing Association Washington, D.C.1961; Idem., *Seventh-day Adventist Believe*, Review & Herald Publishing of SDA, 1988.

in Khasi-Jaintia are valuable to the present research and from the interactions with the members of the SDA and others, substantial information have been drawn for the purpose of the study. In addition, archival records and government publications provide information in relation to the history and contribution of the SDA in Khasi-Jaintia Hills.

From the review of literature, it appears that the SDA was ignored altogether in many church histories and secular writings. Hence, the beginning, development and contributions of the SDA in the Khasi-Jaintia Hills and other areas of northeast India received little scholarly attention in the studies on Christianity and Christian missions. There are several factors that may have contributed to the lack of attention towards historical inquiry of the SDA. Firstly, SDA was treated only as an outcome of the failure of the Millerite Movement in USA. Secondly, Adventists have indistinctly captured public attention through interactions with ruling authority or general public. The SDA has never been popular among the large number of people. Finally, the context in which the SDA based its doctrines and practices created doubts in the minds of the observers. Scholars have even looked upon it as a ‘cult’ or a ‘sect’ rather than a Christian denomination.²¹⁷

OBJECTIVE

The objective of this study has been as follows:-

1. To study the origin of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and its inception in Khasi-Jaintia Hills.
2. To examine what distinguishes the Seventh-day Adventist Church from Roman Catholic and Protestant Churches.
3. To study the contributions of the Seventh-day Adventist Church to the Khasi-Jaintia Hills.

METHODOLOGY AND DATA

Empirical method from the historical perspective for re-examining and re-interpreting the existing sources has been applied in the study. Oral history approach is also applied through conversations and interfacing with people. The work is based on both primary and secondary sources available in different libraries and archives.

²¹⁷ Malcolm Bull, “The Seventh-Day Adventists: Heretics of American Civil Religion”, *Sociological Analysis*, Vol. 50, No. 2, 1989, p.177.

The primary data are collected from reports and proceedings, periodicals and journals, and other publications of the Church. The secondary data consists of the published and unpublished works on the Khasi-Jaintia society, Christianity in northeast India and SDA Church in the world and India as well.

CHAPTERIZATION OF THE STUDY

The present study comprises six chapters:

Chapter 1: Introduction - The introductory chapter discusses the socio-cultural life of Khasi-Jaintia prior to the coming of the SDA. It also includes the Christian missions established before the SDA in the Khasi-Jaintia Hills. The change which was brought by colonialism and Christianity in the Hills prior to the SDA has also been dealt with. The chapter also includes the review of literature.

Chapter 2: The distinguishing features of the Seventh-day Adventist Church - The distinguishing features of the SDA have been analysed in this chapter. An account of its beliefs and practices is also studied. It deals with the philosophy, beliefs and practices of the SDA on worship, health, education, lifestyle, etc., that distinguishes it from Roman Catholic and Protestant Churches. This chapter also provides a brief outlook on the organizational structure of the SDA and its mission.

Chapter 3: Advent of Seventh-day Adventist Missionaries - This chapter starts with a detailed discussion on the political, economic, social and religious condition of the USA during the nineteenth century and on the eve of the establishment of SDA. The study also gives detailed account of its formation, growth of the SDA, and expansion in different fields of missions such as education, medical and evangelism. This chapter provides a short account of the beginning of SDA in India and northeast India. The last part of the chapter deals with the arrival of early Seventh-day Adventist missionaries into the Khasi-Jaintia Hills.

Chapter 4: Role of the Missionaries and the Khasi-Jaintia people - This chapter provides an analysis of the establishment of the SDA church in Khasi-Jaintia Hills by SDA missionaries. It also examines the growth and development of the SDA in the Hills. Furthermore, the discussion also focuses on the role of the missionaries and the local members of the SDA in Khasi-Jaintia. It also studies the reaction and response of the people towards the SDA.

Chapter 5: Contributions of the Seventh-day Adventist Church - This chapter studies the contributions of the SDA and discusses the contributions of the missionaries and the indigenous members of the Church especially to the field of education in Khasi-Jaintia Hills.

Chapter 6: Conclusion - This chapter provides an overview of the entire discussions and observations based on major facts and findings.
