

CHAPTER 4
ROLE OF THE MISSIONARIES AND THE
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Literature as a catalyst to the promotion of the faith is discussed in detail in this chapter. Literature became the initial link between the Adventists and non-Adventists. Gradually through literature, the relationship between them developed, SDA was strengthened and expanded to the new areas even to the peripheries of Shillong. In continuation of the discussion on the previous chapter, the formal establishment of the SDA as well as its growth and development in Khasi-Jaintia Hills is further discussed in this chapter. The first part of this chapter discusses in brief about the role of literature on bringing consciousness in society and the second part of the chapter deals in detail about the expansion of SDA in Khasi-Jaintia Hills including the reaction and response.

ARRIVAL OF REGULAR SDA MISSIONARIES AND WORKERS IN KHASI-JAINTIA HILLS

Prior to the departure of the Hardinges in 1933, L. J. Burgess and his wife Georgia Burgess arrived in Shillong in 1931.¹ The Burgesses were the first regular missionaries to settle and work in the Khasi-Jaintia Hills.² They chose Shillong as a last station to spend the last part of 35 years of service in India for two considerations: firstly, their mission had not taken off here, and secondly, the climate, the social ambience and the people themselves held much promise if the Mission set up base there. Furthermore, the climate, particularly suited Mrs. Burgess whose health was deteriorating.³ In this regard, L.G. Burgess wrote:

The climate has been all that one could desire. Shillong has been well named 'The Queen of Hill Stations.' The market is well supplied with vegetables and fruit throughout the year and there is no lack of the usual comforts of life. Besides this, the people are friendly and contented with their present lot, so that we are not troubled with political agitation. This atmosphere is a favourable one for the giving of the message... The earthquakes which occur

¹ In 1916 Burgess was appointed Superintendent of Bengal Mission. After serving in Mussorie and Ranchi for many years, the Burgesses went to San Francisco and returned to Ranchi in September of 1930. See, L. J. Burgess, "An Interesting Experience At Sea", *Eastern Tidings*, Vol. 25, No. 23, December 1930, p.8.

² See W. A. Barlow, "Shillong", *ibid.*, Vol. 29, No. 15, August 1934, p.4.

³ L. J. Burgess, "Shillong", *ibid.*, Vol. 27, No. 18, September 1932, p.7.

monthly, if not more frequently, do not disturb one, as the houses are especially built to withstand considerable shaking.⁴

Initially the Burgesses stayed at the house near present N.E.C Nongrim Hills Shillong. Georgia Burgess spent her time giving Bible studies to a Khasi girl who visited her several times a week to teach the wife of her gardener to read Khasi. After considerable weeks of study, Burgess learned the Khasi language and was able to write an eight page tract "Signs of Christ's Second Coming." as a part of her language study. Around this time, there were nine members who began observance of the Sabbath;⁵ among them were Jwinsilis Kharkongor and Kwinsilis Kharkongor.⁶

During the month of April 1932, a colporteur, R. Fraser and her sister Gwen visited Shillong and stayed with the Hardinges. She was able to gather about one hundred subscriptions for *Oriental Watchman*, besides the sale of numbers of 'Health and Longevity'.⁷ The Frasers stayed around four weeks in Shillong. On Saturday, after attending the morning service at the Hardinges' place, they continued evening service at the Burgesses' home. On the last Saturday of their vocation in Shillong, they assembled for worship with some of the Khasi Sabbath-keepers.⁸ During her canvass work, Fraser commented:

The people were friendly and kind, and although Shillong is not nearly as large as some of the other hill stations in India, there were over a hundred who subscribed to the magazine. A few of these were Europeans, but the majority were Assamese, Khasis and Bengalis. The European population of Shillong is very small, consisting mainly of important officials of the Assam Government.⁹

It was in the month of July 1932, L.G. Burgess took the land which was situated in Springside Nongthymmai Shillong on lease from Wilson Reade for free. According to the agreement, it was stated that Burgess will construct the house in the leased land and after a period of fifteen years, both the land and the house will be

⁴ *Ibid.*, p.7.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p.7.

⁶ Information gathered from Lucy Kharkongor, daughter of Kwinjilis Kharkongor, resided at Nongthymmai, Shillong. Jwinsilis and Kwinjilis Kharkongor belonged to the Christ National Church (Balang Trai Ri), an indigenous Church sprang up from the Presbyterian Church. Both of them attended the Bible studies regularly since the time of Hardinge, however, it took them many years to be baptised and convert to the SDA.

⁷ W. A. Barlow, "Literature Distribution in Shillong," *Eastern Tidings*, Vol. 28, No. 14, July, 1933, p.7.

⁸ R. Fraser, "The Sabbath in Shillong", *ibid.*, Vol. 27, No. 14, July 1932, p.11.

⁹ R. Fraser, "Experiences in the Colporteur Work", *ibid.*, Vol. 27, No. 11, June 1932, p.6.

returned to the owner. However, rent has to be paid to the lessor (land owner) if the lessee still occupies the house after the leased elapse.¹⁰ Burgess moved from his house near N.E.C today to the newly constructed house at Springside which was named 'Pisgah'.

Arrival of literature evangelists - Another colporteur W.A. Barlow and his wife arrived in Shillong in early 1932 to help in distributing literatures.¹¹ He stayed with the Burgess family and as soon as he arrived he requested for copies of Adventist periodicals and books which were sent to him from Poona for the missionary work in Shillong.¹² During the month of May he was able to circulate 146 copies of the *Signs of the Times* and *Review and Herald*,¹³ 349 copies of English and Khasi tracts on the second coming of Christ, and sold 10 copies of English books in Shillong among the European, Bengali, and Khasi.¹⁴ In his letter written to J. C. Craven, Barlow said:

One day, I was out circulating the *Oriental Watchman* and other papers and gave one to a lady I met standing at the corner of a road. She was grateful to receive the copy, and I afterwards called upon her and invited her to our Sabbath meetings held in the home of Brother and Sister Burgess. She came one Sabbath and has attended almost every service since. Her daughters are expected here shortly and she hopes to bring them along to the Sabbath services also. It was our literature that helped and interested her in present truth. I understand this lady is the great-granddaughter of that mighty man of God, the late William Carey.¹⁵

W. A. Barlow left Shillong in November of 1932, but during his stay at Shillong; he circulated a total of 1,404 copies of the *Signs of the Times*; 1,002 copies of the *Oriental Watchman*; 1,955 copies of the English and Khasi tracts and 156

¹⁰ *Lease Agreement* between L.G. Burgess and Wilson Reade, dated 26th July 1932.

¹¹ "Shillong", *Eastern Tidings*, Vol. 27, No. 15, August 1932, p.8.

¹² W. A. Barlow, "Call for Literature", *ibid.*, Vol. 27, No. 10, May 1932, p.2.

¹³ The *Signs of the Times* and *Review and Herald* are English periodicals of the SDA which are printed in USA and either sold or sometimes were distributed for free to all SDA and non-SDA members all over the world.

¹⁴ W. A. Barlow, "Literature Distribution in Shillong", *Eastern Tidings*, Vol. 27, No. 12, June 1932, p.5. The sale increased in the month of August, in which Barlow was able to circulate 40 copies of *Review and Herald*, 204 copies of the *Signs of the Times* and 246 copies of Hardinge's Khasi tracts on 'Second Coming of Christ'; in addition 100 copies of *Oriental Watchman* were also sold. *Oriental Watchman* is another English periodical of the SDA printed in India which were either sold or sometimes were distributed for free to SDA and non-SDA members in the Southern Asia Division of the Seventh-day Adventists.

¹⁵ J. C. Craven, "Sow Beside All Waters", *ibid.*, Vol. 27, No. 18, September 1932, p.4.

copies of the *Review and Herald*.¹⁶ He returned to Shillong in 1933 and moved to his new house “Stanfer” in which important meetings and *Bible* studies were conducted.¹⁷ In the meantime, M. Z. Nahapiet, colporteur from Kolkata, also came to Shillong for a while to help in canvassing for the Adventist literature.¹⁸ Barlow returned to Shillong in 1933.¹⁹

Gathering help from non-Adventists – W. A. Barlow not only dealt with colporteur works. He devoted his time to collect the Uplift Fund²⁰ by visiting government offices. This provided him with a chance of giving the Adventists pamphlets while collecting donations. Since the time that he had started his work in Shillong, Barlow was able to send only Rs.150 as Uplift funds to the Treasurer at Ranchi office which was collected from about 300 donors.²¹ He pointed out that the reasons for such a small sum of collection was because the Europeans in Shillong were less aware of the Adventist work in general and hence they preferred to donate to Dr. Robert's hospital and other funds in Assam. Among the Government clerks that he visited in the offices, Hindus, Bengalis, Khasis, Punjabis, Mohammedans and others contributed whatever they were able and willing to give from one anna up to two rupees.²²

Selling and distribution of Adventist literature in vernacular - Simultaneously, the Burgesses were persuaded to learn Khasi, and L. G. Burgess made progress with the preparation of a small tract on the issue of Sabbath.²³ They were able to publish a number of tracts in Khasi: “Obedience”, “Searching the Scriptures”, “God's Answers to Man's Questions Guide to Health” and “The Bible Sabbath”.²⁴ The Burgesses were soon joined in the weekly Sabbath service and prayer meetings at their house by Hardinge and his family. Others who attended the service

¹⁶ E. A. Beckner, “In Shillong”, *ibid.*, Vol. 27, No. 22, November 1932, p.7.

¹⁷ W. A. Barlow, “Experiences in Shillong”, *ibid.*, Vol. 28, No. 17, June 1933, p.5.

¹⁸ Particularly the “Oriental Watchman” and “Health and Longevity”. For details See, W.A. Barlow, “Literature Distribution in Shillong,” *ibid.*, Vol. 28, No. 14, July 1933, p.7.

¹⁹ W.A. Barlow, “Literature Distribution in Shillong”, *ibid.*, Vol. 28, No. 11, July 1933, p.7.

²⁰ Uplift Fund is a collection of donations by Adventists from both Adventists as well as non-Adventists for social works which include Medical and Educational Uplift work.

²¹ G. G. Lowry, “Uplift Work in Assam”, *ibid.*, Vol. 28, No. 16, August 1933, p.6.

²² W.A. Barlow, “Uplift Work in Shillong”, *ibid.*, Vol. 28, No. 22, November 1933, p.5.

²³ G. G. Lowry, “News Notes”, *ibid.*, Vol. 27, No. 16, July 1932, p.11.

²⁴ W.A. Barlow, “Uplift and Big Week Experiences in Shillong”, *ibid.*, Vol. 29, No.24, December 1932, pp.3-5.

included Barlow and his wife, and few local Sabbath-keepers.²⁵ In September of 1933, Burgess published an illustrated Khasi booklet on "The Second Coming of Christ," and it was sold at 4 annas per copy.²⁶ From the above information, it seems that the main thrust area stressed by the SDA missionaries to spread among the people was on the 'Sabbath', 'the Second Coming' and 'state of the dead'. In early 1934, L. G. Burgess claimed to have met many Khasi who evinced interest on these issues after they availed the literature sent by him. Many families were stirred up over these questions, and asked that someone be sent to instruct them. The vernacular which they wrote contains subjects of obedience to the writings in the Bible. Hence one of the areas that the Khasi were drawn to Adventism was mainly due to the influence of literature.²⁷

Attempt to establish Khasi-Jaintia Adventist Church - While L. G. Burgess and W. A. Barlow were busy in their daily routine of spreading the Adventist literature, few Sabbath keepers were keen for establishment of the church. As mentioned earlier in this study, it is vital to again remind here that during these years (1930s), a number of indigenous denominations were established in Shillong. This may have also encouraged them to have a denomination of their own, an Adventist church in particular. This intention was brought to the notice of G. G. Lowry, the superintendent of the North East Union of SDA in December 1933. Lowry received letters from a young Khasi Sabbath keeper who had been writing for a couple of times consecutively for three or four years. Unfortunately his name and identity was not revealed in the report of Lowry. It was told that he was very anxious that permanent work of Adventist Church should be opened up among the Khasi people of Assam. The young man claimed that there were about 20 Sabbath keepers in Shillong who had gathered for a meeting to enquire whether the Union office had any intention to connect the Sabbath keepers in Shillong with the SDA in India. In case that the Union office did not have such intentions, they would establish their own church and would name it 'Ka Balang Sabbaton' literally meaning 'the Sabbath Church'. The letter also further stated that they were going to formally establish it on January 1934. It was also pointed out that the young men have been travelling to villages as well and had been observing of the growing movement concerning the Sabbath. He was confident

²⁵ W. A. Barlow, "Literature Distribution in Shillong", *ibid.*, Vol. 28, No. 14, July 1933, p.7.

²⁶ Idem, "Experiences in Shillong", *ibid.*, Vol. 28, No. 17, September 1933, p.5.

²⁷ G. G. Lowry, "North East India Union Mission Notes", *ibid.*, Vol. 29, No.6, March 1934, p. 6.

that as soon as the church was established, he would be able to draw round 2000 Sabbath keepers before 1938.²⁸ However, this proposal was not accepted by the Union office and the plan for setting up of the proposed Church came to a grinding halt.

Visit of Adventist workers to Shillong - The news of the presence of good number of recent observers of Sabbath not only in Shillong but in distant villages as well excited the Union office. These Sabbath keepers were anxious to have a full time Adventist worker in their midst. Since then, many Adventist missionaries visited Shillong. In August 1934 G.G. Lowry and his wife were accompanied by Gwen Carrau in their visit to Shillong and distant villages. A series of conventions were held laying emphasis on the Sabbath School and Educational work in this field.²⁹ Lowry conducted a number of meetings at Barlow's place every Wednesday and Saturday. Other visitors include Miss Dyer of Calcutta church school and J.J. Matson and his wife from Simla. Subsequently, C.A. Larsen and his family³⁰ after returning from a furlough in America and Denmark were sent in Shillong. The Larsens learned Khasi³¹ and conducted evangelistic meetings and *Bible* studies for interested parties in some of the villages in Khasi Hills.³² It is not known how long the Larsens stayed in Shillong, but it seems that it was only a matter of two or three years.³³ During the summer of 1935 and 1936, Adventist workers visited Shillong on their vocational holidays and leave. Some of them included Votaw and family, H. H. Mattison and family from Ranchi, C. Jensen and Arnold from Karmartar, Peak and her boys and Mrs. Dyer from Calcutta and D. Warden,³⁴ Strever and his wife, Dr. and Mrs. Johannes, Mrs. Lewis, Hunter and his wife and Mr. Simpson.³⁵

Spread of Adventist literature - In the meantime, W. A. Barlow continues to receive Adventist literature in Hindi, Bengali, Tamil and Telugu sent to him by Miss Belchambers, C. Craven and Miss. Dyer.³⁶ In addition, he circulated literatures of

²⁸ G. G. Lowry, "Lay Member Writes From Assam", *ibid.*, Vol. 28, No. 23, December 1933, p.5.

²⁹ However, in a short time Miss Carrua left Shillong after her hill leave stationed was over and went to Lucknow to assist in the office work. Pastor Lowry was accompanied in his tour of the mission stations by E. D. Thomas. See, G. G. Lowry, "Notes", *ibid.*, Vol. 29, No. 15, August 1934, pp.3-4.

³⁰ W. A. Barlow, "Shillong", *ibid.*, Vol. 29, No. 15, August 1934, p.4.

³¹ G. F. Enoch, "Notes", *ibid.*, Vol. 29, No. 14, July 1934, p.8.

³² G. G. Lowry, "The First Baptism in Assam", *ibid.*, Vol. 29, No. 23, December 1934, p.7.

³³ H. G. Woodward, "Report of the Northeast Mission", *ibid.*, Vol. 32, No. 01, January 1937, p.6.

³⁴ W. A. Barlow, "Distributing Literature in Assam", *ibid.*, Vol. 30, No. 13, July 1935, p.4.

³⁵ J. F. Ashlock, "Shillong Notes", *ibid.*, Vol. 31, No. 15, August 1936, p.7.

³⁶ W. A. Barlow, "Shillong", *ibid.*, Vol. 29, No. 15, August 1934, p.4.

Gurumukhi, Urdu, Nepalese and English. It was told that around 311 copies of Bible portions in Chinese were sold to Chinese boot-makers and carpenters in Shillong. Burgess sold more than 500 copies of the Khasi booklet on “The Signs of the Second Coming of Christ.” It can be noted that till this point of time that since his arrival in April, Barlow was able to circulate 2,489 copies of vernacular tracts, 161 *Signs of the Times*, 679 copies of *Present Truth Series*, 79 copies Silver Jubilee volume of the *Oriental Watchman*.³⁷ Towards the end of 1935 Barlow retired from the mission work but continued to stay in Shillong. In his last report, Barlow claimed that in his years of service as a colporteur, he was able to circulate 1446 copies of the Present Truth Series, 361 copies of the weekly published Signs of Times, 2940 copies of Hindi and Bengali tracts, 887 Khasi tracts, 50 copies of Khasi booklets “God’s Answers to Man” and “Guide to Health, 50 copies of Silver Jubilee edition of *Oriental Watchman*, 2 English bible and 1 Bible Readings for the Home Circle.³⁸ However, even after his retirement as a full fledge colporteur of the mission; Barlow continued to promote Adventist literature. Barlow’s dedication as a colporteur gained him the reputation of being called “The *Bible* and tract man”.³⁹ Moreover, he was also known for his beneficent character. It is told that he used to keep coins and rice to distribute to any passerby who was in need.⁴⁰

Second baptism at Shillong - R. E. Rajee, a teacher by profession at Laitkynsew learned about the Adventists through the literatures which he got in hand to read. He was taken to meet Burgess and later became convinced to observe the Sabbath on Saturday and finally converted to the Adventist faith.⁴¹ On 16th September 1934, Rajee and his wife Phrolibon Lyngdoh were baptized by L. G. Burgess.⁴² After E. Dhorom, these two seemed to be the Khasi who were baptized and joined the mission work.⁴³ It is estimated that based on the aforementioned baptisms, including those of E.G. Hardinge and his wife, the membership of the Sabbath keepers in

³⁷ Idem, “Distributing Literature in Assam”, *ibid.*, Vol. 30, No. 13, July 1935, p.4.

³⁸ E. D. Thomas, “The Influence of Christian Literature”, *ibid.*, Vol. 30, No.17, September 1935, p.5.

³⁹ *President’s Report of Assam Section of Seventh-day Adventists*, presented at the Northeast Union Constituency, December 30-January 4, 1966, p.1.

⁴⁰ K. Kharbteng, “Church Growth in the Khasi-Jaintia Conference, Meghalaya, India”, (unpublished) Doctoral Dissertation, Andrews University, Michigan, 2001.

⁴¹ Information gathered from the interaction with Jerlie Tariang, son of R. E. Rajee.

⁴² G. G. Lowry, “The First Baptism in Assam”, *Eastern Tidings*, Vol. 29, No.23, December 1934, p.7.

⁴³ Idem., “Notes from the Northeast”, *ibid.*, Vol. 29, No. 21, November, 1934, p.6. Lowry mentioned them as “the first Assamese to be baptized and join our Mission.”

Shillong up to 1934 seems to have been not more than 10.⁴⁴ However, by this time, the Khasi, apparently were ready for the opening of the Adventist establishment. The response from those who had accepted the Adventists' teachings was getting better and the prospects seemed good for a Khasi church.⁴⁵

Departure of Georgia and L. G. Burgess - The Burgesses finally left Shillong in December, 1934. Initially, they had a plan of settling permanently in Shillong, but due to health problems of Georgia Burgess which required immediate medical treatment, they had to leave for U. S. A. L. G. Burgess passed away in June 1946,⁴⁶ and Georgia Burgess died on 19th September 1948.⁴⁷

BEGINNING OF THE FORMAL MISSION OF THE SDA IN KHASI-JAINTIA HILLS

The foundation laid by the Hardinges and Burgesses was further strengthened by the arrival of J. F. Ashlock.⁴⁸ He arrived at Shillong on 27th June 1935 and was soon appointed the Superintendent of the newly formed Assam Mission. The area for the Mission was restricted to Khasi-Jaintia Hills.⁴⁹ As soon as they reached Shillong, the Ashlocks learned the Khasi language and were speaking and preaching in it fluently.⁵⁰ Ashlock travelled to areas in Khasi-Jaintia Hills where Sabbath keepers were present. He was accompanied by Rajee and others. In addition to the continuing efforts by Barlow to promote Adventist literature, Ashlock was able to further gather more people who were curious about the Adventists doctrines. Gradually, there were increasing numbers of interest in Shillong and in the periphery through the already existed Sabbath keepers and baptised members.

⁴⁴ K. Kharbteng, *op.cit.* p.62.

⁴⁵ T. J. Michael, "Opening Providences and Pressing Needs in Southern Asia", *Eastern Tidings*, Vol.29, No. 17, September 1934, p. 4.

⁴⁶ L. G. Mookherjee, "Mrs. Georgia Burgess-Pioneer Missionary to India", *ibid.*, October 1946, p.6.

⁴⁷ K. Kharbteng, *op.cit.*, p.61.

⁴⁸ Ashlock and his family came to India on April 1929 to take up the Home Missionary and Missionary Volunteer work in the office of the South Asia Division at Poona. See "Division News Notes", *Eastern Tidings*, Vol. 24, No. 7, April 1929, p.8.

⁴⁹ O. W. Lange, "News Notes from the Khasi Hills", *ibid.*, Vol. 37, No.22, November 1942, p.3.

⁵⁰ By June of 1936 Ashlock the superintendent of the Assam mission was very fluent in Khasi to the point that he conducted Sabbath school in Khasi language. His wife who was also the secretary of the mission gave her report in Khasi and both of them took classes in Khasi. See, W. A. Barlow, "Shillong", *ibid.*, Vol.31, No. 11, June 1936, p.8.

The Ashlocks organized Sabbath Schools at their residence which drew some Khasi in Shillong towards Adventism. According to the *Comparative Sabbath School Report of the Second Quarter 1936*, there were 55 members of the Sabbath School in Shillong which rose to 62 in September 1937.⁵¹ Due to limited space at their house, the Ashlocks could not accommodate any further increase in attendance. Furthermore, *Bible* studies were conducted in three nights each week in their house. The increase in number of Sabbath School attendees led the Ashlocks to expand the congested space. It was in the evening of 11th August 1936 that around 125 people, SDA followers and others gathered at their place to take part in the opening of the 'Reading Room'.⁵² Moreover, the Ashlocks adopted two features in their evangelistic programs. First, daily visits to every home of those who attended the Sabbath Schools and evangelistic meetings at Ashlock's place and secondly, they prepared for every sermon a synopsis in Khasi which was distributed to the attendees at the close of the meeting. This helped the attendees and the others who could not attend to review the sermons, and established confidence in them which enabled them to study and discuss the topics in their homes.⁵³

Procurement of the property of the SDA at Shillong - After the Burgesses left Shillong, the house 'Pisgah' was used by the SDA and was managed under the supervision of the India Financial Association of Seventh-day Adventists. J. F. Ashlock was authorized as an attorney for and on behalf of the Association. However, in February of 1936, the SDA sold the house to Wilson Reade at Rs.900 and released the lease which the latter had with L. G. Burgess.⁵⁴ In order to carry the activities of the church, the greatest need of the hour was a permanent location for the Ashlocks. Perhaps owing to a sense of apprehension of the Adventist work among the locals, it seemed impossible to rent suitable accommodation. H.G. Woodward in his writing

⁵¹ Sabbath School Department, "Comparative Sabbath School Report Second Quarter, 1936", *ibid.*, Vol.31, No. 19, October 1936, p.8.

⁵² The gathering place was named as the "Reading Room" so as to give to it a dignified title since there was no appropriate name for the drawing room, dining room, bedroom, and bathrooms where the smaller classes meet for study. See, J. F. Ashlock, "Assam Notes", *ibid.*, Vol. 35, No. 3, February 1940, p.7; also see J. F. Ashlock, "Shillong Reading Room", *ibid.*, Vol. 31, No. 18, September 1940, p.6.

⁵³ N. C. Wilson, "Good News From Assam", *ibid.*, Vol. 32, No. 17, September 1937, p.7.

⁵⁴ For details see, "Conveyance", between the India Financial Association of Seventh-day Adventists and Wilson Reade, dated 12th February 1936, supplied by Betty Syiem daughter of Wilson Reade, to the researcher.

mentioned about the opposition to the Adventist work which make it harder for them to rent good buildings. Despite the difficulties, the Ashlocks managed to find a bungalow in Laitumkhrah, Shillong. Part of this bungalow was used as a reading-room and meeting hall. The reason that he was allowed to acquire this building and its premises was because it was believed to be haunted.⁵⁵ The property had ample space for the erection of a Church building, and was therefore proposed to be acquired by the Mission. Thus the first immovable property of the SDA was secured on 21st December 1937, when K. Adhikary, the Extra Assistant Conservator of Forests, Government of Assam sold the 44,000 square feet plot of land at Fire Brigade, Laitumkhrah to the Seventh-day Adventists missionaries for Rs.8,800.⁵⁶ In the meantime, with the fund granted by the General Conference for the new mission property in Shillong, the preparation for the construction of the building for the church was carried out swiftly.⁵⁷ The Superintendent of North East Union, F. H. Loasby came to Shillong, to administer the plans to be submitted to the authorities for the necessary permission.⁵⁸

Thus we see that the Adventists from a modest beginning could establish a church in Shillong on their property and were able to propagate the faith. In this regard the contributions of Raymond and Hardinge have been discussed in the previous chapter and Ashlock and other missionaries in this chapter. What we could find important to mention that the activities of the SDA ministers and missionaries on the outskirts of the city and among the less literate section had a greater success. Now with the permanent land and office the persons involved in the activities of the Church had to face reactions from the people and finally the response of Khasi-Jaintia people proved to be crucial in the expansion of the SDA. The dimensions of reaction and response are discussed below in order to have a comprehensive and objective picture of the rise and growth of SDA in Khasi-Jaintia society.

Formal establishment of the SDA in Khasi-Jaintia Hills - Among the missions of Southern Asia, Assam was the youngest and smallest. Subsequently, the

⁵⁵ H. G. Woodward, "Shillong: A Call", *Eastern Tidings*, Vol. 31, No. 22, November 1936, pp.3-4.

⁵⁶ "Sales Deed, Santana, 2nd December 1983", as cited in 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, p.94.

⁵⁷ "Division Notes", *Eastern Tidings*, Vol. 32, No. 23, December 1937, pp.6-7.

⁵⁸ F. H. Loasby, "A Visit to Shillong", *ibid.*, Vol. 33, No. 15, October 1938, pp.4-5.

Shillong church was formally organized on 4th June 1938 with sixteen members, in the presence of N. C. Wilson, the President of the Southern Asia Division and G. G. Lowry, the President of the North East Union of SDA.⁵⁹ By September of the same year, there were 25 members in the Church which rose to 34 by September of 1939.⁶⁰ Prior to the establishment of the church, there were 89 members in three Sabbath Schools and the attendance was 93.⁶¹ By September 1938, there were 4 Sabbath Schools in Shillong in which the average attendance rose to 80 in two months and totaled 162 Sabbath School members.⁶²

Interest of the Khasi-Jaintia people on the SDA - The article of F. H. Loasby sheds light on the response of the people towards the missionaries and their activities to some extent. A number of nurses from the 'large mission hospital' (Dr. H. Gordon Roberts Hospital) attended the meetings held at Ashlock's house regularly for studies. They were not urged, or even invited. Loasby observed that these nurses were fine young Khasi ladies, highly intelligent and educated. This led to the inquisitiveness of the people in Shillong about the Adventist message. Initially, parents of Islora Rajee were opposed to their daughter's allegiance to the Adventist missionaries. However, in short period of time, they became friendly and had developed interest as well. Loasby also considered the Khasi people to be sturdy and independent thinking folk. He referred to Olington Gatphoh's grandparents who join the Adventist movement after their grandson. However, his grandfather told Ashlock that he joined the Adventist church not because of the influence of his children but he believed in the doctrines by himself.⁶³ Between 1937 and 1939, Ashlock was able to convene six evangelistic meetings. In these meetings he was assisted by Lange, Barlow and Boykin along with their wives. These evangelistic meetings were not confined to Shillong; Ashlock organized two months' series of meetings in the Jaintia hills and found a keen interest there as well. The people took part in the programmes

⁵⁹ "Statistical Report of the Southern Asia Division of Seventh-day Adventists", *ibid.*, Vol. 33, No. 12, June 1940, p.4.

⁶⁰ "Statistical Report of the Southern Asia Division of Seventh-day Adventists, *ibid.*, Vol. 34, No. 18, September 1939, p.4.

⁶¹ "Sabbath School Report - First Quarter 1938", *ibid.*, Vol. 33, No. 14, July 1938, p.5.

⁶² "Comparative statement Third Quarter Sabbath School Department: July – September 1938", *ibid.*, Vol. 35, No. 1, January 1940, p.1.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, pp.4-5.

organised at the beginning of 1939, and all the baptized members pledged themselves to help in the future programs of the Church.⁶⁴

Establishment of SDA School at Shillong - In his other report in early 1938, Loasby expressed enthusiastic feeling about the development of the Adventist work and the growing interest of the Khasi Sabbath keepers in Shillong and its suburbs as well as some villages. He profoundly insisted on the need of a European family to assist the Ashlocks. His concern was that Khasi workers were required in the growing field. He also suggested that a high school be set up at the earliest to enable the children of the Adventist family to attend.⁶⁵ This urgent requirement came due to the pressure by Sabbath keepers and baptized members as well as those who were already in baptismal classes, since their children had to attend classes at Government and missions schools which were opened on the Saturday. Moreover, in these schools, Adventist children were teased by their fellow students and were called by names such as the 'Jews', the 'Sabbatons' and so on.⁶⁶ Hence they were anxious to have an Adventist school at the earliest. Their plea was fulfilled with the arrival of O. W. Lange⁶⁷ and his wife Sylvia Lange at Shillong in August 1939.⁶⁸ The Langes were accompanied to Shillong by C.A. Boykin and his family.⁶⁹ The latter stayed in Shillong for two months and were active in participating in the evangelistic programs especially in the field of singing and music. In the Northeast Biennial Meeting which was held in Calcutta from 16th to 20th March, 1939 which was attended by delegates from Bengal Mission, East Bengal Mission, Orissa Mission, West Bengal Mission, Bihar Mission and Assam Mission it was voted to open a church school at Shillong, where there is a great need for such an institution. The meeting was also attended by E. D. Dick from the General Conference, N. C. Wilson, A. E. Nelson, J. M. Sleeves,

⁶⁴ J. F. Ashlock, "Each Brought One", *Eastern Tidings*, Vol. 34, No. 9, May 1939, p.3.

⁶⁵ F. H. Loasby, "Northeast Union Report 1938", *ibid.*, Vol. 34, No. 3, February 1939, pp.6-7.

⁶⁶ J. F. Ashlock, "We Need A School", *ibid.*, Vol. 33, No. 3, February 1939, p.4.

⁶⁷ "Pastor O. W. Lange came to India in 1930. He was engaged in evangelistic work in Surat until 1934 before he was transferred to Vincent Hill School where he was preceptor for one year. He moved to Bombay in 1936 and stayed for two years and he was ordained to the ministry in Poona in 1937". See, *Southern Asia Tidings*, Vol. 49, No. 1, January 1954, p.7.

⁶⁸ F. H. Loasby, "Doing in the Northeast", *Eastern Tidings*, Vol. 34, No. 16, August 1939, pp.5-6.

⁶⁹ The Lange stayed in a house named "Swiss Cottage", the site where the present Marbaniang Petrol Service at Madan Iewrynghep is located. See, K. Kharbteng, *op.cit.* p.66.

and E. D. Thomas from the Southern Asia Division.⁷⁰ Subsequently, in 1939, Sylvia Lange started a small church school known as Shillong Church.

Proposal for construction of the church building - J. F. Ashlock was in-charge as Superintendent and looked after the Sabbath School and Home Missionary departments as well. F. J. Mainstone served as Secretary-Treasurer and O. W. Lange looked after the Educational and Young People Missionary Volunteer departments. The committee of the Assam mission included J. F. Ashlock (Chairman), F. J. Mainstone (Secretary), F. H. Loasby, O. W. Lange and R. E. Rajee.⁷¹ In October of the same year Loasby revisited Shillong to get the work started on the new church building. This urgent requirement of the building was because of the attendance at the meetings kept increasing. More than two hundred people attended these meetings at Ashlocks' house, occupying the side rooms too. The following statements shed light on the condition at Ashlock's house observed by Loasby:

These are either sitting or standing in every available place, including those looking in at the windows and crowding the veranda, listening as best they could, to say nothing of those sitting in the dining-room, where only about one third of them are able to catch a glimpse of the speaker through the open door. Then there are others in what the Ashlocks would like to call their parlour (although they have not had any opportunity of enjoying such a luxury so far), who cannot even see the speaker however much they may crane their necks to do so; but they sit there quietly and listen, and this in spite of the fact that the Shillong brethren do not believe in short, or even medium-sized, sermons. They are usually very long sermons. Some excellent people are attending these meetings, and the interest is very high.⁷²

Due to the outbreak of the Second World War, the increase of prices, they managed to lay the foundation of the building only with the amount of money they had in hand. The outline of the church plot is such that in order to bring the floor of the church level to the same height as the floor level of the existing bungalow, the church has to be built on piers from six to eight feet high; and in a place where, because of the frequency of earthquakes, there are certain definite requirements, as well as restrictions, this means an added cost in building. The basement was

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.6-7.

⁷¹ F. H. Loasby, "Northeast India Biennial Meeting", *Eastern Tidings.*, Vol. 34, No. 8, April 1939, pp.6-7.

⁷² *Idem.*, "Northeast Notes: Shillong", *ibid.*, Vol. 34, No. 21, November 1939, pp.6-7.

converted into suitable rooms for a permanent church school.⁷³ The construction was able to carry out through the donations which amounted to Rs.2,500 received by Ashlock and Lange from the Uplift fund.⁷⁴

The average Sabbath school attendance increased to 100 during the months of October and December 1939. The class records revealed that the average number who studied the Sabbath school lesson daily for the last quarter was 72. The membership of the Shillong church at the close of 1939 was 50. The treasurer received Rs.1,069 in tithes in 1939. This did not include the tithes of the European workers. On the first Sabbath school of 1940 there were 112 present. The annual meeting of the Assam Mission was held at Shillong from 4th to 7th January 1940. The subjects discussed were, “The Signs of the Times,” “The Holy People,” “The Holy Tithe and the Holy Sabbath,” “The Doctrines of the True Church,” and “The History, Progress, and Certain Victory of the Remnant Church.” F. C. Gilbert, N. C. Wilson, A. E. Nelson, and F. H. Loasby visited the Shillong church from 17th to 21st January.⁷⁵ In January 1940, the Southern Division Committee sanctioned additional money for the construction in Shillong and was placed under the supervision of Loasby who has been staying in Shillong to help in the construction of this church building.⁷⁶

GROWTH OF SDA IN KHASI-JAINTIA HILLS PRIOR TO INDIA’S INDEPENDENCE

By 1940 the SDA missionaries along with the local members planned to carry out their threefold purpose of their evangelistic programs: “to win men to Christ, to establish them in His church, and to train them for His service.” In carrying out these objectives six evangelistic meetings have been conducted for the last three years. The shortest series of these meetings lasted about two months, and the longest more than four months. Five to seven evening services were held each week accompanied by baptismal classes and *Bible* studies. Due to constraint of space in private homes, the attendance was kept for the minimum number of participants in the series meetings. This in turn provided ample opportunity to the mission workers to give personal

⁷³ *Ibid.*, pp.6-7.

⁷⁴ F. H. Loasby, “Shillong Church Building”, *Eastern Tidings*, Vol. 34, No. 23, December 1939, p.5.

⁷⁵ J. F. Ashlock, “Assam Notes”, *ibid.*, Vol. 35, No. 5, March, 1940, p.7; Also see R. S. Fernando, “Notes From The Northeast”, *ibid.*, Vol. 35, No. 6, March 1940, pp.5-6.

⁷⁶ N. C. Wilson, “Division News Note”, *ibid.*, Vol. 35, No. 1, January 1940, p.8.

attention to interested individuals. Till that point of time J. F Ashlock claimed that ten baptismal services have been held and that not one apostasy has occurred in the church so far. It was made sure that daily study habits should be established among the attendees. In the same year, in addition to W. A. Barlow's work, more than 1,200 Khasi small books have been sold, and 16,000 Khasi tracts circulated. Hundreds of English small books, *Oriental Watchman*, *Present Truth*, and *American Signs* have been circulated to many Khasi homes. Apparent interest was evinced in twenty villages largely as a result of this literature ministry.⁷⁷ There were eight Sabbath schools and Home department groups which met regularly every Sabbath.

J. M. Sleeves, who was passing through on his way to Mussoorie from Assam, stopped off for a day at Lucknow and spoke in the prayer meeting on 27th November 1940. He brought a report of the progress Adventist work among the Khasi and Jaintia people in Shillong, and told stories of the persecutions⁷⁸ of the young people who were converted to Adventism.⁷⁹ R. S. Fernando in his "A Visit to Assam" wrote about the progress of the SDA in Khasi and Jaintia hills. He was impressed with the selling of Adventist literature. In his remarks he stated,

The printed page is being freely used in this field. Over a dozen different Khasi tracts and pamphlets are in circulation. For the first time the Sabbath school senior quarterly appeared in print this quarter. Suitable lessons are still being mimeographed for the juniors. A large number of English Crisis series, Conflict of the Ages series, and other denominational books have been sold. The book display in the Shillong mission house prominently exhibits the Word of God in Assamese, Bengali, English, Khasi, and Nepali. This miniature Book and Bible House is one that should be duplicated in every missionary home.⁸⁰

According to his report, the baptized membership at the end of 1940 stood at fifty-two, with fourteen in the baptismal class, and a Sabbath school membership of 140. Furthermore, the funds raised in 1940 included a sum of Rs.1006 as the tithe received from foreign members, tithe received from indigenous members was Rs.1028, Sabbath Schools offerings came up to Rs.818 and other mission offerings was Rs.123; while the Uplift Contributions amounted to Rs.1397. in addition, the

⁷⁷ J. F. Ashlock, "Assam Notes", *ibid.*, Vol. 35, No. 3, February 1940, p.7.

⁷⁸ Unfortunately, no records of the type of persecution meted out were chronicled.

⁷⁹ P. K. Simpson, "Lucknow Church News", *Eastern Tidings*, Vol. 36, No. 1, January 1941, pp.5-6.

⁸⁰ R. S. Fernando, "A Visit to Assam", *ibid.*, Vol. 36, No. 12, June 1941, pp.6-7.

Local Church Funds and the Church School Fees was Rs.1481 and Rs.436 respectively. The overall fund raised in Assam mission hence totaled Rs.6313.⁸¹

Through the donations from the people and funds provided by the Division, the church building was completed by March 1941. It consists of a basement for conducting the church school. The local members and donors contributed the amount necessary for the church furnishings. The dedicatory service was held on 1st March 1941.⁸² It was an overwhelming feeling for the Seventh-day Adventists in Shillong when the church was inaugurated. First of all, Shillong being the headquarters of the Government for the north east province would give the SDA scope to expand without much difficulty. However, the drawback was that most of the desirable areas were taken up by other Christian denominations long before the Adventists' work began in Assam. Secondly, the church was able to secure the property of the mission at a central location without any difficulty. The church building and its premises were built on a spacious area surrounded by large residences. The church lies opposite the arterial highway connecting the rapidly growing suburb and the cantonment with the bazaar and the older sections of the city. All who came to Shillong from the eastern section of the Khasi and Jaintia Hills used to pass the church on their way to the Laitumkhrah market and other parts of the town. Another reason was that not only is the building well situated for church needs, but the site provides enough space for the church school and provided ample school grounds which separated the church yard from the school. Lastly, since for decades the members had squatted in Ashlock's place and filled his house for prayer meetings and Sabbath Schools. It was now a great relief for them and the Missionaries as well since now they could attend the services comfortably in the big space now provided.

At the time of the opening of the church building, there were 4 Sabbath Schools in the Assam Mission with a membership of 140 and attendance of 173.⁸³ R. S. Fernando took over as Treasurer and S. Kharmawphlang was appointed as one of the Executive Members.⁸⁴ At the close of 1941, there were 57 members of the church.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, pp.6-7.

⁸² O. W. Lange, "The Dedication of the Shillong Church", *Eastern Tidings*, Vol. 36, No.10, May 1941, p.4.

⁸³ Sabbath School Department, "Comparative Statement First Quarter", *ibid.*, Vol. 36, No.14, July 1941, p.8.

⁸⁴ "Executive Committee Assam Mission", *ibid.*, Vol. 36, No.6, March 1941, p.3.

In March, 1941, O.W. Lange moved to Jowai and established a school which would later become the Assam Training School (hereafter, ATS. At present it is known as Adventist Higher Secondary School) at Thadlaskein. W.A. Barlow died in Shillong on 20th October, 1942 and was buried in the Shillong Adventist Church Cemetery. His wife returned to Calcutta and stayed with her grandchildren.⁸⁵

Spread of Adventism to other areas in Khasi Hills - Everwell Morton Kharsyntiew, was highly impressed with the Adventist teachings after he attended the evangelistic meeting held at Ashlock's place in 1939. He then invited Ashlock to conduct the same in Lyngiong, a village 35 kilometers from Shillong. Subsequently, R. E. Rajee was sent as a full time mission worker of the SDA to Lyngiong. After Kharsyntiew and his family observed the Sabbath and accepted the doctrinal teachings of SDA, they were baptized on 24th December 1939.⁸⁶ Since then, many people were baptized but they stayed as isolated members. It was in 1974 that the SDA in Lyngiong was formally organized and with a donation of Rs.7000 from the SDA Shillong office, the construction of the church building also started.⁸⁷ In Cherrapunjee, Dr. Riangmon S. Laloo, a medical practitioner became the first Adventist in 1942, later followed by his wife, Enomeris and daughter, Ibahun. He became a very strong influence of the SDA in Cherrapunjee and the War area. Laloo organized Sabbath schools in adjoining areas of Cherrapunjee including non-Christian villages. In order to foster this interest he made repeated requests for someone to come and conduct evangelistic meetings. At this request, R. E. Rajee was sent to develop the interest among the people there. The locals were reluctant to get treated by Laloo because of his conversion, however, when a young village sirdar (provincial head) was healed with Laloo's treatment; he accepted the Adventist teachings and began practicing it.⁸⁸ After Cherrapunjee, Sohryngkham is another village where Adventists began their works. A little branch Sabbath school was organized by Rajee after a series of meetings held in the village of Sohryngkham, about seven miles from

⁸⁵ O. W. Lange, "The Work in Shillong and Khasi Hills", *ibid.*, Vol. 37, No.23, December 1942, p.5.

⁸⁶ The baptized included Lasiensyntiew Kharbteng, Kendrowell Kharbteng and Tibon Swer.

⁸⁷ Information on the SDA at Lyngiong was given by Aibok Kharpran, Director Education, Communication and Children Ministries, Khasi-Jaintia Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Shillong, in a personal interaction with the researcher.

⁸⁸ O. W. Lange, "News Notes from the Khasi Hills", *Eastern Tidings*, Vol. 37, No.22, November 1942, p. 2.

Shillong.⁸⁹ Soon after these meetings, local people of the village began to observe Saturday as a Sabbath and were baptized into the Adventist faith. The church at Sohryngkham was formally organized in 1950.

Spread of Adventism in Jaintia Hills - The Adventist work in Jaintia hills expanded with the arrival of O.W. Lange. Though before him, L.G. Burgess and J. F. Ashlock have ventured into the hilly terrain of the area. However, it was Lange who organized a team of Adventists from Shillong to visit the centre of Jaintia Hills District, Jowai with a motive to promote Adventist works. Lange was accompanied by L. C. Shepard, Secretary of Publishing Department, Southern Asia Division in mid-1941. The meetings which they held on Sunday nights at a rented place of Lange were attended by local people. In these meetings, the missionaries found it difficult to get time to cater to many people who wanted help from them.⁹⁰ Lange claimed that in the first Sabbath there were nine attendees who came to the Sabbath school without invitation. It increased to twenty five in the second Sabbath and ultimately rose up to fifty seven during the third Sabbath and about fifty at the prayer meeting. Since then, the attendance increased to two hundred fifty, and all this without advertising, mechanical helps, meeting hall, *Bible* workers, or brass band. The situation was similar to the one in Shillong before the church building was established. To accommodate the crowd, they were making use of the sitting room, the dining room, the kitchen, and all available space in the rented house in which the Langes live.⁹¹

Although Lange visited Adventist missionaries have visited Jaintia Hills District occasionally, the formal establishment of Adventist work in the District began at Mowkaiaw. It all began when a resident of Mowkaiaw, Albin Roy Dkhar was studying at the Presbyterian Seminary in Cherra when he received a tract written by Burgess. After a careful study, he wrote a letter of inquiry to the author. The letter was forwarded to Burgess who had returned to America and the letter came back to Ashlock who corresponded with Dkhar and sent him more literature. Dkhar's command of English was very limited while Ashlock was just beginning his learning of Khasi; so there were some language difficulties between the two of them.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p.2.

⁹⁰ O. W. Lange, "Great Interest at Jowai, Assam", *Eastern Tidings*, Vol. 36, No.16, August 1941, p.7.

⁹¹ R. S. Fernando, "A Visit to Assam", *Review and Herald*, Vol. 118, No.59, December 1941, pp.14-15.

Nevertheless, Dkhar walked from his village to Shillong to meet Ashlock.⁹² Shortly after that he went back to his village to proclaim the Adventist message. He was baptized by Ashlock in a small river Montakur which is not far from his residence. He escorted Ashlock and Rajee in their journey to Mowkaiaw. He was the first Adventist in Mawkaiaw and started his service from 1937 onwards. Ashlock and his wife held a series of evangelistic meetings at Mowkaiaw and appointed Dkhar as the representative of Jaintia hills district.⁹³ Dkhar and his family which included his two sisters joined the SDA. By 1938 more members were baptized by Ashlock at Umthang which is further from Montakur. Later, baptism was done at river Um Khlieh-Synrang located downhill of present cemetery of Seventh-day Adventist in Mowkaiaw. Initially, mission works, evangelical meetings, Sabbath Schools and church services were held at Dkhar's residence. A school was also opened for small children at a room donated by Dkhar from his house. By 1942 a series of evangelical meetings were being conducted in Mawkaiaw.⁹⁴ Albin also conducted a small village school and carried on evangelistic work. It was till the 30th December, 1944 that the formal establishment of the SDA at Mowkaiaw was accomplished. In 1945 the school and the church have been shifted from Dkhar's residence to a newly constructed site in Lumshor to accommodate the school teacher who looked after the school and the pastor of the church.⁹⁵

Prior to the departure of the Ashlocks to America on furlough in 1942,⁹⁶ a meeting was held in Shillong to plan for programs in all the departments. In order to keep the work going in Assam, reshuffling of the duty of the workers of the Church was done. Lange was transferred to Shillong to foster the evangelistic activities whereas C. Jensen was given charge of the ATS when it opened its second year of service at the new premises. He was accompanied by E. N. Simon, who spent the year in the canvassing work, as a school staff. C. B. Israel and Islora Rajee got married and worked at the Shillong church school. Three new Sabbath schools were organized and the membership rose to 231. The indigenous tithe receipts for 1941 totaled Rs.1,275, and the mission offerings Rs.2,265. By June of 1942, the church membership was

⁹² J. F. Ashlock, "Shillong Notes", *Eastern Tidings*, Vol. 31, No.15, August 1936, pp.7-8.

⁹³ R. B. Thurber, "Circuit-Riding in the Northeast—II", *ibid.*, Vol. 37, No.1, January 1942, pp. 4-6.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁹⁵ Khasi-Jaintia Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, "Ka History Ka Balang Seventh-day Adventist Ha Mowkaiaw", *Ki Khubor Ka Balang Basah*, No.31, Feb-March, 2012., pp.13-18.

⁹⁶ E. M. Meleen, "Missionary Sailings", *Eastern Tidings*, Vol. 37, No.12, June 1942, p. 7.

59.⁹⁷ L. G. Mookerjee reported in 1943, that the membership of the Assam Mission in Shillong was 63; there was one organized church, 4 companies and 5 Sabbath schools.⁹⁸ Lange moved back as principal of the ATS in 1943 and Jensen was in-charge of the Assam mission at Shillong until the return of Ashlock. Lange held the office of principal of Assam Training School from 1939 to 1948. He then served at SDA Calcutta and in June 1952 he became Secretary of the Home Missionary and Sabbath School of the Northeast Union.⁹⁹ He retired in 1974, after nearly fifty years of denominational service.¹⁰⁰

Role of Khasi-Jaintia Adventists - In the beginning of 1944, the membership at the Church in Shillong was 57 after four members left the church.¹⁰¹ There were six Sabbath Schools in the Assam mission.¹⁰² During the Big Week Campaign which the Division office organized to sell literatures and collection of offerings, Shillong leads the Union in the amount of the offerings.¹⁰³ Israel, Solington and Rajee went to Guwahati to do the Uplift work. Rajee and Solington had a goal of Rs.100 each. Later Solington collected an amount of Rs.193, Rajee got around Rs.206 while Israel got Rs.217 out of his goal of Rs.250.¹⁰⁴ These three went out together with a goal of Rs.450 and brought Rs.649.¹⁰⁵

R. E. Rajee was transferred to Cherrapunjee in 1945 while S. Kharmawphlang moved to Sohryngkham to set up a school and a church. Church membership increased to a total of 88 in three churches i.e, Shillong, Mawkaiaw and Thadlaskein.¹⁰⁶ Jerlie E. Rajee, a graduate of the class of 1945 from Spicer Collge, has been doing some Uplift solicitation in Shillong where he collected over Rs.800 in two weeks.¹⁰⁷ By the end of 1945, O.W. Lange was in-charge of the church at ATS, Ulster W. Fanwar at Mawkaiaw while R. E. Rajee and O. Gatphoh were in-charge of

⁹⁷ R. S. Fernando, "Northeast News-O-Graphs: Assam", *ibid.*, Vol. 37, No.12, June 1942, p.6.

⁹⁸ L. G. Mookerjee, "In the Khasi and Lushai Hills", *ibid.*, Vol. 38, No.22, November 1943, p.2.

⁹⁹ For details see, *Southern Asia Tidings*, Vol. 49, No. 1, January 1954, p.7.

¹⁰⁰ He spent his last days in Asheville, North Carolina and on 12th May 1987 he had a stroke while fixing the tires, and five days later he passed away. See, J.M. Fowler, "Till He Comes—O.W. Lange, 1904-1987", *ibid.*, July 1987, p.14.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. 39, No.4, February 1944, p.4.

¹⁰² "Northeast Union", *Eastern Tidings*, Vol. 39, No.3, February 1944, p.5.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

¹⁰⁵ L. G. Mookerjee, "Uplift Work in the Northeast", *Eastern Tidings*, Vol. 39, No.10, March 1944, p.6.

¹⁰⁶ R. S. Fernando "Thadlaskein", *ibid.*, Vol. 40, No.12, June 1945, p.4.

¹⁰⁷ "On and Off the Campus", *ibid.*, Vol. 40, No.10, May 1945, p.6.

Shillong and its suburbs. The membership stood at 51 at ATS, 15 at Mawkaiaw. At Shillong and its suburbs the membership came down to 35.¹⁰⁸ In the meantime, before the end of the school year, fifteen members were baptized at ATS out of a class of twenty-seven.¹⁰⁹

From 23rd to 27th of January 1946, the Assam annual meeting was conducted at Mawlong, a village five miles down from Cherrapunjee. Syrgen was in-charge of the church at Mawlong. The attendance ranged between 100 and 125 throughout.¹¹⁰ In February 1947, during the Big Week campaign, R. E. Rajee visited the churches at Shillong, Lyngiong, Sohryngkham, Cherrapunjee, Mawlong and Sohkhuni. During the campaign, under the leadership of R. S. Laloo from Cherrapunjee and Syrgen from Mawlong, Khasi books are sold at the rate of 8 annas. Rajee provided a list of the selling which goes as follows:

27 sets of “Big Week” in English.

37 copies of “The Law and the Sabbath” in Khasi.

6 copies of “The Way to Everlasting Peace” in Khasi.

6 copies of “The Coming King” in Khasi.

4 copies of “The Present Life and the Future” in Khasi.

3 copies of “A Guide to Health” in Khasi.

1 copy of “The Way to Christ” in Khasi.

5 copies of “The Cigarette as a Physician Sees It”.

1 Bed Time Stories.

Rajee further claimed that 4,100 pages of Khasi literature were sold and a Big Week offering of about Rs.58 was collected. He spent the Week of Prayer in Mawlong, conducted several meetings and preached in services. The morning devotional service at 8 a.m., the Sabbath school at 12 noon, and the last reading at 3 pm and sometimes continued with another 8 p.m service. According to him, the amount of the offering collected from the Cherra District was Rs.163.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸ R. S. Fernando, “Table of Churches in the Northeast India Union”, *ibid.*, Vol. 41, No.24, December 1946, p.4.

¹⁰⁹ R. S. Fernando, “Baptisms in the Northeast”, *ibid.*, Vol. 41, No.1, January 1946, p.4.

¹¹⁰ O. A. Skau, “Assam Annual Meeting Union”, *ibid.*, Vol. 41, No.7, April 1946, p.6.

¹¹¹ R. E. Rajee, “Work at Mawlong”, *ibid.*, Vol. 42, No.4, February 1947, p. 5.

Departure of J. F. Ashlock - Ashlocks returned back to India and reached on 22nd March 1947. They paid a short visit to Poona after which Ashlock resumed as the superintendent of the Assam Mission.¹¹² In June 1948 they returned to America to get Mrs. Ashlock's eyes operated.¹¹³ She injured one eye on their return from furlough while on board the SS *Brazil*, and the other eye when the jeep they were travelling fell from a small bridge on their way to Mawkaiaw⁵. Ashlock and his wife returned to India in 1950 and served as Secretary of the Southern Asia Division until 1954. He retired in 1966 as a Missionary Volunteer leader and General Field Secretary of the Division. Upon retirement the Ashlocks settled in Collegedale, Tennessee. J. F. Ashlock passed away on 17th June 1984¹¹⁴ and Marcella Ashlock on 10th November 1997.¹¹⁵

Spread of Adventism to other parts of northeast India – Prior to 1941, the work of the Assam Mission has been almost entirely restricted to the Khasi and Jaintia hills. In 1941 that Zuala Sailo from Lushai hills¹¹⁶ came into contact with Ashlock and soon developed a desire to attend school at ATS so that he could prepare to take the Adventist teachings to his own people. After he took admission in the school, he remained unhealthy but after eight months of sickness he was again permitted to join the last few weeks of school. He was baptized with a group of young people at the close of the school year. After he learned from Hoag's colporteur institute at the school, he was able to practice his colporteur skills at Jowai by circulation of the *Oriental Watchman*. Upon his return to the school from his home in 1942, he urged for Lushai literature to be distributed among his people by the end of the year. With the approval of the Northeast Union and the Publishing House at Poona, the preparation of the literature in Lushai had begun.¹¹⁷ Interestingly, the church at ATS gained more members by the end of 1946, one was baptized in April and 17 of them were baptized on 23rd November 1946.¹¹⁸ There were 42 who were attending

¹¹² "Gleanings", *ibid.*, Vol. 42, No.7, April 1947, p. 8; also "Gleanings", *ibid.*, Vol. 42, No.8, April 1947, p.8.

¹¹³ "Gleanings", *ibid.*, Vol.44, No.4, February 1949, p.8.

¹¹⁴ D. W. Hunter, "Till He comes", *Southern Asia Tidings*, September 1984, p. 15.

¹¹⁵ K. Kharbteng, "Church Growth in the Khasi-Jaintia Conference, Meghalaya, India", *op.cit.*, p.64.

¹¹⁶ "Sabbath School and the Home Missionary Service at the South Asian Youth Congress", *Eastern Tidings*, Vol. 48, No.1, January 1942, pp.5-6.

¹¹⁷ O. W. Lange, "News Notes from the Khasi Hills", *ibid.*, Vol. 37, No.22, November 1942, p.3.

¹¹⁸ Information gathered from personal interaction with Holiwell Dkhar, oldest living minister of SDA Shillong. He was one of the baptised.

baptismal classes waiting to be baptized.¹¹⁹ During the school vacation period, student colporteurs that got trained at ATS spread to different parts of Khasi and Lushai and hills.¹²⁰ As a result, the SDA missionaries entered Lushai hills in September of 1947.¹²¹ Through their circulation they were able to gather students from other tribes to enroll at the ATS at Thadlaskein enrolled which were gathered by Khasi and Lushai colporteurs. Hence a fusion of culture (mixture) was prevailed at ATS such as Khasi, Pnar, War, Bhoi, Lakir, Hindi, Nayal, Manapuri, Garo, Nepali, Lushai, Assamese and others from smaller districts. On 15th February 1947, first two Garo converts were baptized.¹²²

EVANGELISTIC MEASURES OF THE SDA IN KHASI-JAINTIA HILLS IN THE POST-INDEPENDENCE PERIOD

The growth of the SDA met a drastic decrease in 1948. As per the report of O. A. Skau, Superintendent of North East India Union, the goal for number of baptism for six months was 25, however, only two baptism occurred. There was slight increase in the financial status. The table below indicated figures of comparison.¹²³

	1945	1946	1947	1948
Baptisms	30	82	50	64
Tithe	Rs. 22,043-14	Rs. 20,112- 2	Rs. 19,313- 1	Rs. 18,485-12
S. S. Offering	6,053- 7	5,314-11	4,767-13	6,346- 0
Uplift	9,732-15	9,105- 9	4,950-10	3,836- 1
Missions	S. S. Goal	Actual	Over	Under
Assam	Rs. 1,250	Rs. 1,467-14	Rs. 217-14	
Bihar	1,500	2,195- 9	695- 9	
E. Pakistan	950	1,086- 4	136- 4	
N. Bengal	375	579- 2	204- 2	
W. Bengal	1,250	859- 4		Rs. 390-12
Orissa	175	157-15		17- 1
Totals	Rs. 5,500	Rs. 6,346- 0		

On 10th September 1949, the SDA at Shillong organized the Voice of Prophecy rally. It was conducted by A. E. Rawson, Secretary of the Ministerial Association and director of the Voice of Prophecy. He was assisted by C. J. Jensen, Superintendent of the Assam Mission, Chad Israel, the *Voice of Prophecy* secretary of

¹¹⁹ O. A. Skau, "Baptisms in Assam", *Eastern Tidings*, Vol. 42, No.3, February 1947, p. 7.

¹²⁰ O. A. Skau, "Gleanings from the Northeast India Union Committee", *ibid.*, Vol. 42, No.6, March 1947, p. 7.

¹²¹ O. W. Lange, "Adventist Missionaries now enter Lushai Hills", *ibid.*, Vol. 42, No.18, September 1947, pp.2-3 & 6.

¹²² O.A. Skau, "New Openings in the Northeast", *ibid.*, Vol. 42, No.8, April 1947, p. 6.

¹²³ Table extracted from O.A. Skau, "God's Assurances and Our Reports", *ibid.*, Vol. 43, No.21, November 1948, p. 6.

the Northeast Union and other Adventist workers. The number of attendance increased from 160 on the opening night to 200 in the second night and ultimately rose up to 300 in following nights. Since the church building was so small and could not accommodate all the attendees, the hall at the Shillong Club was used for two nights. About 900 attended the two meetings held the first evening and extensively increased to 1000 in the last night.¹²⁴ As a result of these meetings, several hundred signed up for the *Voice of Prophecy* courses.¹²⁵ According to the *Fourth Quarter Report of the Sabbath School Department Southern Asia Division, 1948*, there were 317 members in 11 Sabbath schools in which a collection of Sabbath school offerings amounted 719 in that quarter.¹²⁶

Towards the end of 1949, N. O. Dahlsten and his family arrived in Kolkata from China toward the end of last year. He was sent to Shillong as Superintendent of the Assam Mission. J. Pandit, a teacher at the ATS went to Salisbury Park Poona to help in translation of the entire first course *Voice of Prophecy* into Hindi. In the meantime, O. W. Lange asked for more copies of adult Sabbath school lessons, primary Sabbath school lessons and other books from the Division office to be supplied to the Assam Mission.¹²⁷ He visited Shillong in January 1950 and also went to ATS where D. S. Laursen and his wife, M. V. Broderson along with the staff were managing the school. Lange baptized eight people during his visit at the school. Among them was the first Naga who join the school three or four years back.¹²⁸ In June 1951, J. F. Ashlock visited Shillong again and evangelistic campaign was held where he, T. M. Ashlock. E. M. Meleen gave Bible studies. On 16th July 1951, thirteen baptisms were conducted by D. S. Laursen in Shillong.¹²⁹

In course of time, while O. W. Lange was principal of the ATS had established contact with the Naga located in Manipur and many of the English-reading people who had earlier subscribed to the *Signs of the Times* enrolled themselves in the '20th Century Bible Course'. Hence in July 1952, the missionaries

¹²⁴ Chad B. Israel, "Shillong Spearhead Effort and V. O. P. Rally", *ibid.*, Vol. 44, No.21, November 1949, p. 4.

¹²⁵ O. A. Skau, "Round the Field", *ibid.*, Vol. 44, No.24, December 1949, p. 5.

¹²⁶ *Report of the Sabbath School Department Southern Asia Division Fourth Quarter, 1948*, *ibid.*, Vol. 44, No.8, December 1949, p. 8.

¹²⁷ "Gleanings", *Eastern Tidings*, Vol. 45, No.14, July 1950, p. 8.

¹²⁸ O. W. Lange, "Visiting in the Northeast Union", *ibid.*, Vol. 45, No.1, January 1950, p. 6.

¹²⁹ "Gleanings", *ibid.*, Vol. 46, No.14, July 1951, p. 8.

who include F. E. Spiess, T. M. Ashlock who was assigned for the Naga mission and N. O. Dahlsten President of the Assam Mission went to Ukhrul to meet with the people who were interested in the Adventist teachings.¹³⁰ During 1950-1951 the Assam Mission was the only mission in all Southern Asia which doubling its membership. W. G. Lowry took a tour in Lushai Hills and was able to baptize around twenty people in the July 1952.¹³¹ Seventeen persons were baptized in Sohmynting village on 30th August 1952 followed by another five baptism at Mowkaiaw in September. Three weeks ago five were baptized in the village of Mowkaiaw. There was more preparation for baptism in the villages as well as at the ATS. A second baptism was planned to take place in the middle of October.¹³² In October 1952, T. M. Ashlock, baptized a Naga known as Benjamin and his father.

Contribution of Khasi-Jaintia Adventists to the SDA - K. Gopala Rao and M. S. Prasada Rao witnessed a baptism of six people by W. C. Rick at Kyndongtuber on 11th April 1953. This was due to the effort of Worbuwell who had prepared the groups to receive baptism. While Worbuwell was teaching at the ATS, he used to walk out to this village every Sabbath, conduct meetings for them and return to Jowai the same evening. He did this week after week. By June the membership was doubled and the number of members is sufficient to be organized into a regular church. The erection of a church building was in process. This speedy growth was because of the donated land by Holiwell Dkhar. In the meantime, the Sabbath school and church services were held in Holiwell Dkhar's house.¹³³

Evangelistic meetings were conducted in many parts of Khasi hills. Two of these are the one conducted by R. E. Rajee in Sohryngkham, and the other by Baxter Fanwar in Nongpoh. At Sohryngkham the SDA church of eleven baptized members and a church school was established. Fanwar has been conducting meetings at Nongpoh and encountered considerable opposition. Nevertheless, four people went forward in a baptism which made them the first baptized members in Bhoi District. It was seen that a school has become a necessity for the children of the SDA members. Hence, in addition to his evangelistic programme Fanwar also taught a number of

¹³⁰ N. O. Dahlsten, "The Naga Story", *ibid.*, Vol. 47, No.13, July 1952, p.5.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, p.6.

¹³² N. O. Dahlsten, "Souls Saved in Assam", *Eastern Tidings*, Vol. 47, No.21, November 1952, p.6.

¹³³ K. GopalaRao, "Baptism at Kyndongtuber", *ibid.*, Vol. 48, No.13, July 1953, p.3.

hours each day. The community was pleased with the results of his school and continually more students were asked to be admitted.¹³⁴

Due to the rapid growth in the Assam Mission, there was a plan to upgrade it to Union. Targets were made to gain baptism at the same level with the union. More meetings were frequently arranged in the Lushai and Khasi hills. The Ashlocks also came from Poona to conduct many evangelistic programmes and D. W. Hunter (President of North East India Union) was also endeavoured to join them.¹³⁵

Subsequently, 149 Garo Seventh-day Adventists who were living in the district of Mymensingh in East Pakistan, came together to attend the first regional meeting held at Mansaparah church which is about 350 miles away from the Mission headquarters at Gopalgan. C. Jensen from the Northeast India Union and R. S. Fernando and Mr. S. N. Arinda from Gopalganj were present in the meeting. There were four organized Garo churches and eleven Sabbath schools with a membership of 296. First convert from Garo hills, D. C. Marak, was baptized in 1948. Ibrahim Rema was the first Adventist worker among the Garo.¹³⁶ In the initial years, Fanwar was in-charge of the work in Garo Hills.¹³⁷ After him P. K. Gayen took over to incharge the work. Rajasimla was the headquarters in the Garo Hills. According to J. M. Dkhar, the church at Rajasimla was the biggest SDA church in Assam and the first SDA church among the Garos, with ninety baptized members.¹³⁸ By 1955 the Adventist work spread to Resubelpara.

According to the Reports given during the Northeast Union Constituency meeting held at Karmatar from 21st to 26th December 1953; the Assam Mission net increase in membership was 259 percent between the 1950 and 1954.¹³⁹ The Assam Mission Constituency meeting was held at ATS from 13 to 16 January 1954. *Statistical and Financial Report* of the Mission was presented by P. K. Peterson, the Secretary-Treasurer and Sabbath School Secretary, and a report of the school's activities was given by B. J. Williams, the Principal of the ATS. W. G. Lowry and C.

¹³⁴ W. C. Rick, "Khasi Evangelism", *ibid.*, Vol. 48, No.15, August 1953, p.8.

¹³⁵ D. W. Hunter, "Our Goal Plans in the Northeast", *ibid.*, Vol. 48, No.18, September 1953, p.7.

¹³⁶ D. C. Marak, "Good News from Our Garo Believers", *ibid.*, Vol. 48, No.20, October 1953, p.4.

¹³⁷ W. C. Rick, "Soul-Winning Briefs", *ibid.*, Vol. 48, No.21, November 1953, p.7.

¹³⁸ J. M. Dkhar, "Modern Bereans in the Garo Hills", *Southern Asia Tidings*, Vol. 50, No.2, January 1955, p.9.

¹³⁹ J. F. Ashlock, "Progress in the Northeast", *ibid.*, Vol. 49, No.2, January 1954, p.11.

Saikhuma reported the progress of the work in the Lushai Hills; while T. M. Ashlock of the work in the Naga Hills, and Rajee and J. Dkhar of the work in the Khasi Hills.¹⁴⁰

The work at Sohryngkham was in progress through the efforts of K. Kharbteng who served both as a school teacher as well as an elder of the Sohryngkham church.¹⁴¹ A primary school was established at Nongpoh with Baxter Fanwar as its Headmaster. On the 25th September 1954 Sentribon Sweetly, Sinberil Sweetly and Bungton Sumer were baptized by W. C. Rick at Nongpoh.¹⁴² A plot of land costing Rs.600 was bought for construction of the church building at Nongpoh.¹⁴³

R. E. Rajee was the only Khasi member of the Assam Mission Committee. In 1950 he was appointed Secretary of Home Missionary Department and was granted Ministerial Licence. He was given Missionary Licence in 1951. However, due to unknown reasons, Rajee left the SDA in 1954-55. According to the Adventists, Rajee was found guilty of committing adultery, hence he was disassociated himself from the Church and was kept out of SDA's activities. However, it was informed to me by his Jerlie Tariang that Rajee left the SDA because of the biasness of the missionaries.¹⁴⁴

In the post-independence period, especially from 1950 onwards, other areas in Khasi-Jaintia Hills were explored for evangelistic purposes. Places such as Rangmaw, Kyndongtuber, Sohmynting, Mawryngkneng etc were seen as potential areas for the spread of Adventism. Funds for construction of church buildings in new areas were granted by the Division office. In each of the organised churches an indigenous SDA minister was in-charge. K. E. Tariang was the first Khasi to be chosen as the minister in charge (pastor) of the church in Shillong on 23rd August 1955.¹⁴⁵ The publication and literature work did not stop even after the church was organized in Shillong and other areas in Khasi-Jaintia Hills and northeast India. An example can be seen in this case. In 1950, an amount of Rs.17,500 was spent for the printing and translating 'The

¹⁴⁰ P. K. Gayen, "Assam Mission Constituency Meeting", *ibid.*, Vol. 49, No.5, March 1954, p.10.

¹⁴¹ J. M. Dkhar, "Be Ye Also An Example", *ibid.*, Vol. 49, No.13, July 1954, p.9.

¹⁴² M. D. Spicer, "Progress of the Work in Nongpoh-Assam", *ibid.*, Vol. 49, No.21, November 1954, p.4.

¹⁴³ Minutes of the Assam Mission Committee held in Shillong on 13th July 1953.

¹⁴⁴ Information gathered from the interaction with Mr. J. E. Tariang on 20th May 2011.

¹⁴⁵ Minutes of the Assam Mission Committee held in Shillong, 23rd August 1955.

Truth of Our Times' into Khasi, Lushai and Assamese; Rs.4,800 was meant for Khasi only.¹⁴⁶

It is difficult to give a certain status of the indigenous workers and their field of works since within a short period of time (mostly within a year) they were transferred from one place to another to take charge of either evangelistic works or educational works. The real intention behind this fast transfer of workers remains unknown, however, one cannot rule out the possibility that the fear of the SDA missionaries that if a person stay in one single place for too long, he or she may have strong attachment with the people and may go out of the direction of the headquarter. It may be mentioned that people such as R. E. Rajee, Worbuewell, Albin Roy, etc who had been involved in the evangelistic and other activities of the SDA for decades were not given higher responsibility or ordination.

Formation of the North East Union of the SDA - By 1954, the North East Union of the SDA included: Assam Mission, East India Mission, East Pakistan Mission, and Himalayan-Andaman Mission. Out of the 55 organised churches and 2781 membership, 15 organised churches and 855 memberships belonged to the Assam Mission.¹⁴⁷ It was probably between the years 1956-57 that the Assam Mission was renamed Assam Section and the term 'Superintendent' was discontinued and the same office is now 'President'.

Formation of the Assam Section of the SDA - In 1957, the Assam Section was formed which comprised of five Circles for the purpose of distribution of works and spread of evangelistic programmes; these included the Khasi-Jaintia, Garo, Lushai, Naga and Manipuri Circle. However, foreign missionaries were in charge of the Circles.¹⁴⁸ It was till 1965 that the indigenous leaders took charge as Circle leaders in their respective areas. By then a number of indigenous workers became members of the Assam Section Committee.

As per the President's Report presented at the Assam Section Constituency Meeting held on 4th-8th February 1969, there were 39 organised churches and 45

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 4th June 1950.

¹⁴⁷ *Statistical Report Southern Asia Division of Seventh-day Adventists Quarter Ending 31 December 1954, Southern Asia Tidings*, Vol. 50, No.9, May 1955, p.14.

¹⁴⁸ Minutes of the Constituency Session of the Assam Section of Seventh-day Adventists held at the Assam Training School from 20th to 25th February 1957.

companies with a total of 1703 members in all the five Circles of the Assam Section, including the Assam Valley. The sale of literature also increased from Rs.38,945.29 in 1965 to 1,078,289.83 in 1968.

Departure of SDA missionaries from Khasi-Jaintia Hills - Following the orders of the Government of India in 1967 which made it compulsory for the foreign missionaries from the Commonwealth nations to get the permission to enter India and also restrictions on the movement of the missionaries that followed thereafter, most of the missionaries of Welsh Presbyterian church left Khasi-Jaintia Hills between 1969 and 1970.¹⁴⁹ This may have affected the SDA missionaries as well. However, it was informed that the reasons for the departure of the SDA missionaries from the Hills was mainly due to the reorganization of appointments done by the SADSDA which required the shifting of missionaries from established areas to other new fields and some of them were required to continue their works in higher strata of leadership. Another reason was that the SDA Assam Section saw the capability of the indigenous workers to take up leadership.¹⁵⁰ Hence, in July 1971, D. Nongtdu was appointed as the first indigenous President of Assam Section and served till June 1980.¹⁵¹ Meanwhile, K. Kharbteng was appointed as Director of the SDA in Khasi-Jaintia Hills. The Assam Section was reorganized and it was renamed Northeast India Section in 1980. Mizoram Section was formed in 1975 while the Manipur-Nagaland Section in 1982. The Northeast India Section was again renamed Northeast India Union in 1983.¹⁵²

Formation of the Meghalaya Section of the SDA - On 1st January 1984, when the Northeast India Union was formally organised, Khasi-Jaintia Hills were under the newly created Meghalaya Section.¹⁵³ On 25th February 1996, in the Fourth North East India Union Constituency Meeting, the Meghalaya Section was reorganized and it was divided into East Meghalaya Section and West Meghalaya

¹⁴⁹ Amena Passah, "Welsh Presbyterian Mission in Khasi-Jaintia Hills (1841-1969), Unpublished Ph. D. Thesis, North-Eastern Hill University, Shillong, 2005, p.154.

¹⁵⁰ Information gathered from personal interaction with K. B. Kharbteng, President Khasi-Jaintia Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (2004-2014).

¹⁵¹ Information gathered from personal interaction with W. Lapasam, current President of Khasi-Jaintia Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

¹⁵² Edwin Charles, "Northeast India Union Constituency", *Southern Asia Tidings*, May 1984, p.1.

¹⁵³ C .Pherim, "North East India Union: The Message Spreads", *ibid.*, May, 1990, p.4.

Section.¹⁵⁴ The former comprised of Khasi-Jaintia Circle and the latter the Garo Circle. Some of the reasons for this step were due to the growth of membership, language factor and distance factor.¹⁵⁵ At this time of bifurcation, the Meghalaya Section had 16 organized churches, 47 companies, and 55 regular workers (33 of whom were connected with the schools as teachers and staff).¹⁵⁶

Formation of the Khasi-Jaintia Conference of the SDA - The East Meghalaya Section comprised of West Khasi Circle, Central Circle and East Jaintia Circle made a rapid progress in terms of growth in membership and number of new churches. In these Circles, both the Adventist credited workers and members of the church worked together to conduct rallies annually. There were visitation programmes to churches, companies and isolated members by Adventist groups such as the Khasi-Jaintia Youth Association, the Reform Band, the Living Circle and the Advent Singers. There was also significant contribution in terms of financial support through tithes and offerings. This enabled the East Meghalaya Section to support itself both in terms of personnel and finance and was able to gain the status of a Conference. Hence, on 24th January 1998, the Section became the Khasi-Jaintia Conference of Seventh-day Adventist with Shillong as the headquarter.¹⁵⁷ During this time, the membership of the Khasi-Jaintia Conference was 2,379, not counting the death of 11 members and 18 apostasies. There were 16 organized churches, 52 companies and number of workers reduced to 48 on account of retirement.¹⁵⁸

CONCLUSION

Thus, from the study we saw that literature played a major role in the foundation of SDA in Khasi-Jaintia Hills. Firstly, it acted as a source of unconsciousness in the aspect of ideology and mobilization of people. Soon after reading the literature of the SDA, readers became sympathetic to the cause of the

¹⁵⁴ Fourth North East India Union Constituency Meeting, Adventist Training School, 21-25 February 1996.

¹⁵⁵ *Secretary's Report*, First Constituency Meeting Reports of Khasi-Jaintia Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Adventist Training School, 21-24 January 1998, p.2.

¹⁵⁶ *East Meghalaya Section Report to the Fourth North East India Union Constituency*, Shillong, 16-20 February, 1996.

¹⁵⁷ *Secretary's Report*, First Constituency Meeting Reports of Khasi-Jaintia Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *op.cit.*, pp.3-4.

¹⁵⁸ *Secretary's Statistical Report*, Khasi-Jaintia Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1997, p.1 as cited in K. Kharbteng, *op.cit.*, p.84.

Adventists and began to support its programmes. This slowly led them to adopt the ideology and philosophy of the Church and within a short period of time they were involved in its activities as well. This trend of empathizing the cause of the Adventist not only limited itself with the general public but the government officials lend a great deal of support too. Those who interacted with the SDA colporteurs and evangelists bought the Adventist literature or donated some amount to the Uplift fund, indirectly supported the early SDA in the region. Secondly, due to the changes in the socio-cultural and political dimensions, development of vernacular was fast. Initially only English writings were sold and distributed on a large scale. This included the publication of newspapers and several journals, magazines, periodicals and tracts. However with the rise in the use of Khasi language especially by the 1930s, a move was made to spread the philosophy of the SDA in vernacular at a rapid state by using the same means of publication. Hence, finally when these two factors met together, the condition rose from the distribution and selling of Adventist literature was utilized by both the SDA sympathizers and activists.

The important role played by the Adventist literature was noticed by non-Adventist scholar too. In her work, P. Kharakor provides information on the articles and pamphlets written by the Adventist missionaries in vernacular.¹⁵⁹ According to L. G. Burgess, most of the Khasi that were contacted by the Adventists did not hesitate to buy the literature. This he observed that they seemed to be more interested in religion than in politics or most any other subject.¹⁶⁰ However, this mobilization in the field of religion was not because of the lack of political consciousness. He also remarked:

They have the whole of the Bible in their own language and many of them have quite a good general knowledge of its teachings. They never seem to tire of religious meetings. Nearly the whole of Sunday is given up to meetings of various kinds, attended by young and old. Not satisfied, after attending the regular meetings in their own church, frequently a company of boys and girls

¹⁵⁹ These include: J. F. Ashlock's *Ki Jingkylli U Briew, Ki Jubab U Blei/ Ka Lynti Sha Ka Jingsuk Baneh* (n.d), M. K. Ashlock's *Ka Jinghikai Ia Ki Ing Khristan* and *Ka Jinghikai Shaphang Ka Jingkit Jingkhiah Bynta IV* (n.d); and translated versions of E. G. White's *Ki Mawjam Sha U Khrist* (n.d), A.C. Selmon's *Ka Jingkoit Jingkhiah bad Jingimslem* (n.d) and William Hynry Branson's *Kiei Kiei Ki Ban Sa Jia*. P. Kharakor, *Biblical Influence on Pre-Independence Khasi Literature*, Scholar Publishing House (P) Ltd., New Delhi, 1997, p. 273.

¹⁶⁰ L. J. Burgess, "The Pastor Changed His Mind", *Eastern Tidings*, Vol. 29, No. 24, December, 1934, p.3.

have come to our home Sunday afternoons for a song-service. The Khasi are very musical and many of them have excellent voices. They never seem to tire of singing and at their special gatherings the singing of hymns sometimes continues all night.¹⁶¹

Within a short of period of their arrival the SDA missionaries chose places where they could operate the mission. The personal buildings and houses were used for activities of the mission. Though they resided in separate houses, they visited each other's houses and conducted meetings for their Sabbath observance as well as Bible studies. Moreover, perhaps it was their intention or strategy to select peripheral areas for their activities because the central places and residential areas were already under the influence of larger denomination and bigger churches. Hence they were looking into the suburbs and peripheral areas. It may be pointed out that according to the doctrinal teachings of the SDA; the main intention of the Adventists was to preach to the Christian population and less concentration on the non-Christians.

It is also an interesting fact that the early Adventists were helped by many local people in their efforts to learn Khasi and in translation of the Adventists literature. It was told that Twin Kharkongor, the Headman Nongthymmai Lawjynriew helped to teach Khasi language to the Burgesses. Later his sister, Kong Di converted to Adventism and married S. Kharmawphlang, an active worker of the SDA.¹⁶² It was said that Owen Gatphoh, a deacon of the Laitumkhrah Presbyterian church openly spoke against the SDA, however, he was paid for assisting Ashlock in learning Khasi language.¹⁶³ It is an unknown matter about the Presbyterian deacon who though he was not in favour of the propagation of SDA in this area, helped Ashlock extensively in translation works and helped the missionaries in learning the Khasi language. This served the activities and works of Ashlocks since now they could interact with the people in their language. Though the reasons for help by the deacon is certainly not clear and remains unknown, perhaps because of his broad mindedness and belief in pluralism in society that made him deliver the help. Another assumption is that maybe he saw the usefulness of the Adventist literature pertaining to health issues, of which he was ready to help. In the initial phase of the expansion of SDA, it was also informed to me during the field study that salary for translation works was also paid

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p.3.

¹⁶² Information gathered from a personal interaction with Lambok Sohlang, Deacon of SDA Shillong.

¹⁶³ Information gathered from a personal interaction with Holiwell Dkhar.

to Primrose Gatphoh, son of Soso Tham.¹⁶⁴ In addition, it was also told that one of the founders of the Church of God, J.J.M. Nichols Roy used to visit J. F. Ashlock to debate on theological issues.¹⁶⁵

With regards to expansion of the SDA; thus, we see that within the Khasi-Jaintia Conference of the Adventists, from the establishment of their permanent office at Shillong and people's support there, the church expanded its activity from Shillong to remote areas in Khasi-Jaintia Hills. Subsequently, these expansions were aimed to spread education, health consciousness, imparting training etc. however; conversion to the SDA was always a motivating factor. The discussion in the following pages in this chapter centers on the expansion of activities outside Shillong and reaction and response of the people towards the same. The growth of the SDA from 1950s and beyond was largely horizontal in nature. The works of the SDA remained the same; it only expanded its activities in rural areas of Khasi-Jaintia Hills. The Post-Independence period saw the government too emphasizing upon expansion of education and health activities, hence the dependents of missionary schools and missionary health centers weakened. However with regards to Jaintia Hills, it is surprising to find that though the SDA started a school in Jowai, the headquarter of the District since 1941, the SDA was organised only in 1994.¹⁶⁶

In the initial years of the work of the SDA in Shillong, there was much opposition by local people. This is reflected in the writings of the SDA missionaries. The opposition against conversion to Adventism might be because it was a new thing, a new thinking and belief and new ideologies and philosophy. Moreover, the doctrines were considered so distinctively by the non-SDA, and especially due to the observation of the Sabbath, many people considered the Adventists as Jews. The early reactions to the SDA during the first quarter of the 20th century can still be felt either due to the influence of bigger churches, their large number of followers or the principles, belief system and philosophy of the SDA. From the collection of letters and articles communicated between L. G. Burgess and J. J. M. Nichols Roy during the 1930s, it seems that there was a lot of discussion between the two leaders of both

¹⁶⁴ Information gathered from a personal interaction with Lambok Sohlang.

¹⁶⁵ Information gathered from a personal interaction with Holiwell Dkhar.

¹⁶⁶ On 14th September 1996 Kingson Dhar became the first Adventist in Jowai. In 17th May 1997, two members joined him followed by four more on 26th June 1997. Information gathered from personal interaction with O. Sytem, SDA minster Jowai.

denominations. The debate was entirely on the issue of the observance of Sabbath on Saturday. Both of them wanted to spread their comments and commentaries on the issue publicly through the C.O.G periodical *Ka Jingshai Gospel*.¹⁶⁷ The growing sentiment against the SDA philosophy observance of Sabbath on Saturday continued till the 1960s. This is reflected in the work of H. M. Rapphap which was published in 1961. In his work, he has highlighted a brief history of the SDA in the USA. However, he was not able to bring about the history of the SDA in Khasi-Jaintia Hills. Nevertheless in his entire discussion on the issue of the observance of Sabbath on Saturday, he uses both SDA and non-SDA sources. It is a point to be noted that Rapphap in this vernacular work was trying to communicate with the members of different Protestant churches of Khasi-Jaintia Hills and share perspective on the Saturday Sabbath and Sunday worship of Christians.¹⁶⁸

An attempt has been made to survey and research on the social and economic background of the early converts. It was found that the early converts as well as those in the succeeding years belonged to different socio-economic background. The social and psychological influence of the SDA on the lives of its members was not only in spiritual aspects. The beliefs and practices of SDA have challenged the social, cultural and economic practices of the Khasi-Jaintia Adventists.

The SDA after 60 years of its existence in Khasi-Jaintia Hills experienced a fluctuation in the growth of its membership, and there were years when the number of Adventists remained stagnant and at times it decreases too. This may be due to the opposition it met in places where other denominations existed before the SDA. On the one hand, the Church stressed on conversion mainly from Christian population but on the other the SDA seems to intentionally select the areas where literacy rate was low or rather poor in economic condition and most of these areas located in the periphery. Another cause of the decline in terms of membership especially the period between 1950-1962 and 1992-1995¹⁶⁹ was perhaps the growing number of members who left. There are three possible reasons for this, reversion to another faith, marriage

¹⁶⁷ For details see, 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.

¹⁶⁸ For further details see, H. M. Rapphap, *Ka Sabbaton bad Ka Sngi U Trai*, second edition, Shillong, 1967.

¹⁶⁹ K. Kharbteng, *op.cit.*, pp.72-83.

to a non-Adventist and marriage without legal rites.¹⁷⁰ When such cases happened, members were disfellowshipped and as mentioned in the previous chapter, the members have to follow a set of regulations and formalities to re-enter into the Church.

Another factor for the gradual growth of the SDA in Khasi-Jaintia Hills was the emphasis on strict diet. Many of the traditional food items and practices were prohibited by the early Adventists and as it turns out that even after the indigenous leaders took over the works, the rate of growth was still slow and this can be attributed to the restrictions that a person has to observe once he or she converted to Adventism. Another important factor which affected the growth of the SDA in Khasi-Jaintia Hills was the aspect of a community life. In Khasi-Jaintia society, mostly the conversion to any religion is not personal choice. Decisions taken by a person not only affect him or her but on the family and clan too. This is reflected especially in rural areas where the community life is more strengthened. Hence if a person wants to convert to the Adventist faith, one has to be well aware of the consequences. Finally, the domination of a single denomination in an area prohibits the entry of a new denomination and adjustments were made to restrict the members of a denomination from attending the meetings conducted by the Adventists or to take part in any new developments. The differences in the theological background, philosophy and practices between other Christian denominations and the Adventists too became a contention.

Major changes took place in the SDA in Khasi-Jaintia Hills in the year 1971 when indigenous leaders took charge of the Church. The growing political consciousness towards creation of separate Meghalaya had an impact on the Church as well. Though indigenous leadership has emerged in the SDA, the expansion of SDA has not taken place in a century or so like other denominations. There seems to be a general opinion that in the earlier days when the SDA in Khasi-Jaintia Hills was organised by the foreign missionaries, management was strict and hence, more efficient.¹⁷¹ However, this could be a personal thought which may not carry any

¹⁷⁰Information gathered from a personal interaction with K. B. Kharbteng, President Khasi-Jaintia Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (2004-2014), Shillong.

¹⁷¹ This we found evident in the work of Nalini Natarajan. As told by a Khasi gardener at the church building in Nongthymmai to her, “he remarked that the maintenance of the garden and bungalow was

significant truth. There was a growing interest on the activities of the SDA both in theological and social aspects, hence even when the rate of growth was not rapid in comparison with the other denominations, it does not mean that it was insignificant.

better when the American missionaries were at the helm of management.” See, Nalini Natarajan, *The Missionary among the Khasis*, Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1977, p.79.