CHAPTER III

DEVELOPMENT OF PRIMARY EDUCATION IN THE NER BEFORE INDEPENDENCE

3.1 Development of Indigenous System of Education in the NER:

The pre-historic period, down to 1000 B.C. gives no evidence of having any systematic type of education. Family was perhaps the only agency of education. The head of the family transmitted the knowledge of Vedas to his sons in the case of Brahmins. Later when life became more and more complex some learned persons by virtue of their having vast knowledge and reputation attracted pupils from all castes to come and live in their respective homes to acquire knowledge. Thus gradually appeared on the scene - the professional teachers as "Gurus" and the educational institutions called "Gurukuls" or "Ashrams".

The Brahmins who were more learned than others took over the complete control of imparting education and in due course of time they gradually evolved a systematic pattern of education known as Brahmanic education. It aimed at imparting religious education as well as preparing individuals for their future vocations strictly in accordance with their family traditions (varna).

2. ibid, p. 90.
3.1.1. Development of Indigenous System of Education in the Plain Areas of NER:

There was an indigenous system of education before the Christian missionaries landed on the soil of North-Eastern Region of India. There were similarities between the indigenous system of education prevalent in the plain areas of Assam, Tripura and Manipur on one hand and the rest of India on the other hand. Gurukul system of education was prevalent just before the occupation of NER of India by foreigners. In the plain areas of Assam, Manipur and Tripura, like other parts of the country had the indigenous educational institutions like (i) Pathsalas for the Hindus (ii) Maktabs or Madrassahs for the Muslims (iii) Tols for Brahmins and (iv) Sastras for Baishnavas as stated earlier. The Sastras greatly influenced the cultural and religious life of the Assamese, Manipuri and Tripuri people respectively. They have not yet lost their influence altogether. ³

The indigenous system of education was confined only in theoretical knowledge, religion, political and administrative system and no scientific methods were adopted. In ancient days only the upper classes including elite group of people were imparted indigenous education and there was restriction for education by

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an ordinary people. The prevalent system of indigenous system of education was not according to the needs, demands and requirements of the people of NER of India.

It is clear that, the king Bhaskarvarman of the seventh century did a lot in popularising education among the people of Kamrupa, Pragjyotishpur, Harupeshwar, Duraya and other prominent centres of learning. There were State Royal Chronicles in Assam, Manipur and Tripura, which proved the development of indigenous system of education throughout NER of India. The education in the ancient period in NER was under the control of private agencies. The policy for exercising the control in the educational sphere was mostly determined by the individual Guru or set of Gurus or Pandits or Teachers. The rulers encouraged the private agencies from time to time to spread the knowledge. It is very difficult to trace the prevailing indigenous system of education in NER of India chronologically prior to the arrival of Britishers, due to the insufficient data and information. Although enough materials are not available chronologically with regard to the prevalent indigenous system of education, it has been proved beyond doubt that Assam played an important part towards the promotion of education in NER in ancient period. The progress of Assamese education at that time could easily be compared with that of any region of India.
3.1.2 Development of Indigenous System of Education in the Hill Areas of NER:

In the hill areas of NER, informal education took place mostly through interaction between children and their parents in the family and work place in the case of the young. As children gradually grew into adolescence, they were attached to local dormitories, where they received much of the education and training needed in adult life. These dormitories had been powerful institutions with sanction from the local community and served an important educational function as agencies to impart education for the intellectual and emotional development of youth in the community. They remained active till the advent of the missionaries into the region when a beginning was made in the introduction of modern formal system of education in the whole areas particularly in the hill region.

In fact, before the advent of missionaries education did not develop in (i) Arunachal Pradesh (ii) Meghalaya (iii) Mizoram and (iv) Nagaland. The indigenous accounts and chronicles are not available adequately to write something about the development of education prior to missionaries in these four states. The historical records are available only from the time of British hegemony.
3.1.3 Development of Indigenous System of Education in Manipur:

The history of education before pre-Christian era cannot be traced with much detail except collected from the folklore and other related sources. It is difficult to ascertain the form of government prevailing before 8th century A.D., but it is believed that some form of government i.e. monarchy could have prevailed during the period. In the chronicle of the adjoining kingdoms some stories of Manipur were available in the terms of passing reference but the information were too meager to give a coherent picture of the story of that time.  

The first evidence of palaeolithic culture in Manipur dating back to about 30,000 B.C. to 40,000 B.C. was discovered by Prof. T. C. Sharma, and O. Kumar Singh. Whatever the age and origin of the Manipuri civilization, there can be no doubt that its civilization is an old one and it has existed as an independent kingdom from a very early period.


5. Laiba, M.T.: "The Geography of Manipur, Imphal, 1988, p.20

3.1.4 Royal Chronicles: "Cheitharol Kumbaba":

The ancient educational history of Manipur can be obtained from State Royal Chronicles called "Cheitharol Kumbaba", which maintains an account of major events like war, accession, death of kings, indigenous system of education prevailed during the period, etc. The recorded history of Manipur as traced in "Cheitharol Kumbaba", begins with the accession of "Pakhangba" (33-154 A.D.) on the throne of Manipur in 33 A.D. He subdued his enemies and laid the foundations of his kingdom on a firm basis. His descendant ruled till 1949. 7

The history of Manipur prior to 1714 may be divided into two periods. 8

a) The puranic age prior to 8th century.

b) The period from 8th century to 18th century.

Manipur Puyas (Chronicles) are not the same as the ancient puranas of Aryans, but are very similar to them and are replete with stories like the creation of earth and other related aspect of social life of the people. However, they can give an account of the prevailing system of unorganised system of education transmitted by means of the verbal art from the older generation to the younger generation. This system of education helped, to a great extent, in the perpetuation of the cultural heritage of the people of Manipur in the past.

7. Govt. of India: "India 1991", Publication Division, New Delhi, 1992, p. 901
3.1.5 Introduction of Bengali Script in Manipur:

It is a well known fact that more than 120 indigenous books (Puyas) on different subjects were burnt in Manipur during the reign of king Garibniwaj (1709-1748 A.D.), at the instigation of a Hindu Missionary, Shantidas Gosai. The period of Garibniwas is regarded an important landmark in the educational history of Manipur. The introduction of Bengali Script in place of Meitei Script by him had an adverse effect on the growth and development of indigenous system of education in Manipur for sometimes as done in the case of Assam and her neighbouring areas. However, new generations made conscious efforts to rejoin and tailor the fragments of Manipuri literature. There were a continuous flow of stream of Manipuri literature and education since the 8th century up to the modern time.

The mode of learning in these periods of Manipur was resembled to a certain extent as that of Gurukul system of ancient India. The students did not reside at the house of teachers except under some specific circumstances of learning. In Manipur, even though the students did not stay at the house of the teachers all the domestic works such as cleaning, sweeping the courtyard, cutting firewoods, fetching water, etc. were willingly carried out for the teachers. The students were trying their best for the personal comfort of the teachers from time to time.
3.2 Contribution of Primary Education by the early Christian Missionaries in the NER:

The work of the various Christian Missionaries in NER of India is well documented. They are the pioneers in the field of Western Education in this region. Among the first missionary groups to arrive in this region, were the American Baptist Mission, the Dutch Baptist, the Roman Catholics and other Presbyterian groups. They came to the interior parts of the region, where the people worshipped the forces of nature as Gods and the belief of superstition was supreme. The people of this region, particularly in the hill areas, spoke different languages/dialects and lived mostly within restricted geographical areas with very little contact with the outside world. Many places in NER, where initial groups of missionaries went, had to face unwanted and hostility from the local people and it took them a long time to gain access to the region and receive acceptability of the people. There followed a period of fruitful interaction between the missionary groups and the people of NER for the benefit of both.

A branch of the Serampore Missionary was set up at Guwahati in 1829. The American Baptist Mission Foreign Society sent a mission under Reverends Nathan Brown and Oliver Cutter to Assam with a printing press, which reached Saidiya in 1866.
Dr. Broson, another missionary, came to Assam and commenced his work among the Nagas in a village near Jaipur. In 1844, the American Missionaries, under Rev. Cutter, set up nearly 14 schools in Sibsagar. In 1845, the first Baptist church was established at Guwahati and branches were opened in the same year at Nagaon and Sibsagar. The missionaries at Nagaon founded an orphanage and started schools and hospitals. During 1853-63 the Welsh Missionaries started many schools in the Khasia-Jayantia Hills, the Garo Hills, Darang and Nagaon District.

3.2.1 Pioneers of Western Education in the NER:

The Christian Missionaries were the pioneers in the field of modern education in Assam and wrote many books in Assamese on diverse subjects. In this way, they developed the modern Assamese prose. The missionaries translated the Bible into Assamese and this was the first Assamese book in print. The first Assamese Newspaper "Arunodaya", the first Assamese Grammar, "Grammar of the Assamese Language", the first Assamese dictionary "Dictionary in Assamese and English" were all written by the Christian Missionaries.10


After the British annexation, Assamese language had been used in the court for more than ten years. But then slowly Assamese was superceded by Bengali because Assam was directly placed under the Government of Bengal. Thus the Government had forced people to write petitions in Bengali and in school also teachers were Bengali.

In the field of modern education the missionaries had advocated for improvement of the vernacular of the people and made invaluable contribution to the Assamese language and literature. The features of the "Arunodaya" were religion, science and general intelligence. This magazine served to spread western type of education and inspired youngsters for an intellectual awakening. It is very interesting to note here that the medium of instruction was Bengali in the primary schools conducted by East India Company whereas it was Assamese language or the mother tongue of the pupils in the Christian Missionary schools. This was vehemently opposed by the Assam people but the British Officers were not interested in language development. In 1871 Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, Sir George Combell restored Assamese to the position originally occupied by it. Thus, the efforts of the missionaries led by Mr. Bronson, a linguist and Mr. Cutter, the printer, together with Assamese leader like Hemchandra Barua were fruitful. It was only from April 19, 1873 that
Assamese language was used as the medium of instruction in the primary schools of Assam. Assamese was also used since then as the language of the court at the lower level.

3.2.2 Excellent work of Christian Missionaries in the NER:

The Christian Missionaries did an excellent work in Assam and covered the hill areas of NER, such as Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Nagaland and Tripura, with a network of elementary schools. These missionaries also opened a number of schools in the different parts of the NER. They entered into interior place of the hills and plains and learnt the local languages. It was a challenging task for the Christian Missionaries to impart education to the children, when the text book were not available in the Assamese language and when the parents themselves were indifferent to the education of their children. If there were no Christian Missionaries in NER of India, the history of Assamese and Manipuri languages and literatures would have been entirely different.

American Baptists had the credit of starting schools for the girls in Assam. In 1840, the first school of this kind was established at Sibasagar by Mrs. Cutter and Mrs. Brown. This was followed by two other girl's schools at Guwahati and Nagaon. In meantime, Mrs. Lewis opened the first girl's school in Khasia - Jayantia Hills. Despite the superstition of the Khasis that every
female who touch a book would be childless, Mr. Lewis succeeded in having a class with 14 girls receiving instruction in "Mother Gift".

3.2.3 Contribution of Christian Missionaries in the Hill Areas of NER:

On the invitation from the British Magistrate of Sylhet, William Carcy of Serampore Mission sent Krishnachandra Pal, the first Serampore convert, to work among the Khasis, in Sylhet who were apparently refugee from inter-tribal was within the neighbouring Khasis kingdom. To strengthen the work, which had started by Krishnachandra Pal at Cherrapunji, Alexander B. Lish, an Anglo-Indian Missionary followed by Joshna Roc landed at Cherrapunji in 1833. In 1841, the American Baptist Mission which had recently established a station at the upper Assam took over the lower Assam and the Welsh Presbyterian Mission stopped into Khasi field.

Before the advent of the British there was no formal system of education in Lushai Hills. The first school was opened on 1.4.1887 at Mac Donald Hill and Aizawl by Rev. Savidge and J.H. Lorrain, the two Baptist Missionaries. In this school 68

boys were enrolled and were given elementary education. The school functioned successfully for a while but had to be closed as the missionaries devoted their time fully, to the literary work such as translation of some sections of the Bible (Gospel of saint John, St. Luke, Acts of the Apostles) and brought out "Lushai-English Dictionary in the same year. However, the converts were given lessons in reading and writing on Sunday. In 1898, three government primary schools were opened in three places: i) Aizawl (ii) Lunglei and (iii) Tlabung. During the year, 27 young chiefs and selected men from villages were given education in the government school in Aizawl. They were given free ration during their stay in Aizawl.  

The Christian Missionaries played an important role in the field of education mainly in the hilly areas of the North Eastern Region of India. They started a number of educational institutions. The missionaries devoted their attention towards the spread of education throughout NER. Christianity penetrated in hill areas because of the social service rendered by the Christian organisations. They confined their efforts for welfare and progress of the areas in which they were settled. They used the Roman Alphabet (English) to write their languages and consequently Khasis, Garo, Mizo, Naga etc. are written in Roman Alphabets. Thus, the advent of missionaries in the NER brought a tremendous impact in the field of primary education.

In December 1839, Bronson started a school and a chapel for the evangelisation of the Nagas at the village of Namsang, at present in the Tirap District of Arunachal Pradesh. Since the first decade of the 19th century, the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society of Burma had been contemplating to extent its operations to China. To make Burma a possible base for the purpose of mission the Baptists sought to start work among the Shans of northern Burma. The opposition of the Burmese authorities made it possible for them to undertake the project. Naturally, the invitation extended to them, in early 1835 by Captain Jenkin's Agent to the Governor-General in the North-East Frontier, to open a mission at Sādiya for working among the Shans, the Singphos, the Khamptis etc. "seem like an answer to prayer," Sādiya the proposed station was considered to be the most feasible entrance from the exterior to the empire of China. To take this new field Reverend Nathan Brown, an expert linguistic and O.B. Cutter, a printer arrived at Saidiya with their families on 23rd March 1836. In the following year 1937, they were reinforced by the arrival of a second batch of missionaries headed by Reverend Mills Bronson.

Like Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya and Mizoram in NER of India, Nagaland and Tripura also gradually spread Western Education under the guidance and supervision of Christian Missionaries. Thus the early Christian Missionaries were
the pioneers of Western Education in the NER of India particularly in the hill areas. If there were no Christian missionaries in the NER, the history of this region would have been entirely different. The tremendous progress of primary education since the independence in the NER, are the contribution of early missionaries work particularly in the hill areas, where the people worshipped the forces of nature as Gods and belief of supervision was supreme.

3.2.4 The Christian Missionaries in Manipur:

The American Baptist Mission in Burma made the first attempt to establish its mission station in Manipur as early as 1836. But this was not possible because of the opposition from the native government which had already accepted Baishnvite Hinduism, as a principal religion by a royal edict in 1709. With it, a new dawn of orthodoxy and conservatism arose particularly among the native aristocrats, which tended to look upon every moment of the white people with misgiving an suspicion. For the Welsh mission too, which had been on a look out for mission field, Manipur was one of the suggested fields because no Christian missionary had ever entered the state up to that time. The unsettled political situation in the state unnerved both the officials and missionaries and the suggestion could not materialise for sometimes.
After Arthington commissioned about 13 missionaries in 1890, William Pettigrew proceeded to Manipur and J.H. Lorrian and F.W. Saridge to Lushai Hills (Mizoram) in 1894. The first missionary who went to Manipur with full patronage from a British Official A. Porteous, the acting Political Agent, was only Mr. William Pettigrew from the Arthington Aboriginese Mission Society, named after Robert Arthington, a millionaire at Leeds near London in 1894. He immediately began his work by opening a school for Manipuri boys at Singjamei (Imphal) on 6th Feb. 1894. However, within 6 months, the British Authorities, who were administering the state on behalf of the Hindu Rajah, then a minor, decided against allowing missionary work among the Manipuri Hindu of valley. Thus Mr. Pettigrew was given permission to take up work at his own risk among the Tangkhul Nagas in the hills to the north-east of Imphal. Accordingly, he established his headquarter at Ukhrul and started missionary work by opening schools.

The state government appointed Pettigrew as Superintendent of the first real census of the hill tribes (1910-11), because he was the only man who knew the language of the hill tribes. Along with his school teachers and some senior students Pettigrew undertook the work of the census and carried it out successfully.

13.Solo and Mahangthei Ed(s).: "Forty Years in Manipur, Assam", Imphal 1986, p.2.
The census work definitely enabled the missionary and his native workers to explore more areas hitherto unvisited. This was in one sense of gain, for he could preach the Gospel to anyone with whom he came into contact.

The arrival of U.M. Fox in Ukhrul in 1911 was a great relief for Pettigrew. They worked together for about a year, Pettigrew had to leave for England in early 1912 leaving his friend to face more or less a similar situation which he himself had experienced. Fox's concept of missionisation was not determined solely by religious factors, but by a close linkage between material comforts and missionary work.

A Middle English School was opened at Ukhrul in February 1897 and served without a break from that day. For years, Mr. Pettigrew was head teacher "Head everything". Hesitant and suspicious at first, the people gradually came to feel that an elementary education for their boys was worth while, and by the time Pettigrew took their first furlough a total of 57 boys had been enrolled in the school in 1903.

With the help and encouragement by the British Officials, village schools were opened on a three year basis in about a dozen villages of the tribes, and young men from the VIth standard of

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the Ukhrul School acted as teachers. The state met the entire cost of this educational programme such as the cost of buildings, the expenses of preparing, and printing the necessary text books, the teacher's salaries etc. It was not until 1920, when the administration of hills was reorganised and the education budget somewhat limited, that the Mission was called upon to make any appropriation towards the expense of the Ukhrul schools. Although in the latter years, specially since large numbers have been considerably curtailed, there was an appreciable sum given by the state for teachers' and students' workshops at Ukhrul and at the Middle English School established by Dr. Crozier at Kangpokpi when Mission moved its headquarter there in 1917.

During the early years of his work in Manipur, Mr. Pettigrew rendered a remarkable service to the state government. He served as an Honorary Inspector of schools for the whole Manipur from 1897 to 1903.15 These long 7 years, Mr. Pettigrew was paid nothing and he served for the people of Manipur. His knowledge of Manipuri, Bengali, tribals and dedicated works that established during his brief period in Imphal, commended to Political Agent of the state and he was asked to assist the government in establishing schools throughout the state. Mr. Pettigrew in his capacity, established state schools in various

parts of the Manipur and appointed teachers. He prepared the curriculum with the help of the Manipuri teachers who had been educated in lower Assam.

The Middle English Schools at Ukhrul and Kangpokpi rendered notable service throughout the years. With one or two exceptions all the mission workers are products of these schools. They served christian community at the very low remuneration. Some Tangkhul Nagas and Kuki boys had graduated from their own High School in Jorhat and were serving as teachers of the higher classes of the Mission schools or as Superintending Pastors of the several areas.

To-day there are numerous primary schools scattered among the non-christian villages of the hill and valley. Since 1932 all the Baptist Mission Schools, working under the same curricula and arrangements are now being made for them to take the same question papers as the non-christian in the state schools. It is a source of satisfaction to know the early efforts of Mr. Pettigrew for imparting primary education among the hill and valley people have met with such success. The contribution of Mr. Pettigrew for the development of primary education is recognised by each and every citizen of Manipur.
3.3 Development of Primary Education during the East India Company (1826-1856):

The first Agent of East India Company, Mr. David Scott, arrived in Assam in 1826 and soon after his arrival he took up measures for promotion of indigenous system of education in NER. In order to placate the feelings of the leading Assamese gentlement of Hindus and Muslims communities he started 11 (eleven) schools mostly in lower Assam as stated earlier. Each school has one teacher and 30 pupils. David Scott also opened a school in Garo Hills for the expansion of primary education among the hill tribes.

The East India Company started educational activities in order to extend their sphere of influence and consolidate power in the NER of India. The main objectives of the Company were: i) to educate the children of European employees (ii) to manufacture some clerk who would help them in running the administration cheaply. But once the Company saw the influence it would acquired by spreading education, its leaders went forward with the policy of starting and financing more schools. David Scott, pressed the government to allow land to pandits for establishment and maintenance of indigenous school. In 1835 the first English school was opened at Guwahati and another English School at Sibasagar in 1841. The purpose of these schools was to implement Lord William Bentinck’s resolution of 1835, which wanted to spread Western literature and Sciences among the people
of India. The East India Company assisted the development of the school systems in the NER by several measures which are as follows:

a) Recurring grant for maintenance of schools.
b) Non-recurring grants were made for building, site etc.
c) The Company sometimes bore all the expenses of repair, renovation and extension of school buildings.
d) The Company directed its officers to help in the raising of funds.
e) It raised subscriptions from rich citizens for the cause of spreading education among the masses.

The number of students attending the English Schools were more than six hundred in 1841. The government also took charge of some schools started by the missionaries and local people. Some Assamese young men educated in English Schools were also appointed in the Company's Offices and this encouraged the higher classes to study English and the demand for English education increased considerably. To meet the growing demand, the Company had to open some schools. Indigenous elementary schools received grant-in-aid according to the recommendations of the Despatch of 1854. The number of schools increased due to the policy of giving grant-in-aid and the enrolment of pupils were also increased

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remarkably. The report of the Director of Public Institution (D.P.I) for Bengal mentioned about the existence of 750 schools in Sibasagar and 600 schools in Kamrupa during the East India Company.

3.3.1 Progress of Western Education in Manipur:

There was no progress of Western Education in Manipur during the period of East India Company. Because the duration of East India Company in Manipur was very short and British Crown became the ruler of India. The rulers and the people of Manipur were reluctant to allow the introduction of English Education and had resisted the moves. Thus the first foundation of Western Education by the Captain Gordon, the first Political Agent of Manipur decayed without knowing by the other and bearing any fruit during East India Company.

3.4 Development of Primary Education during the British Crown (1857-1947):

The foundation of present system of education in India was laid down by Sir Charles Wood, the then President of Board of Control to Government of India, on 19th July 1854. This


educational policy may be called All India Educational Policy and popularly known as the Wood's Despatch (1854). Wood's Despatch is still known as the "Corner-Stone" of Indian education, for it is said to have laid the foundation of present system of education. The Despatch stated that expansion of elementary education was the responsibility of the East India Company which was neglected till date.

Realising the importance of education of the masses in a vast country like India it cannot be handled by the government alone. The Despatch recommended a system of grant-in-aid to private elementary schools on the condition that over and above the tuition fees, the public must give some subscriptions for maintaining the schools. Grants were recommended for certain specific purposes, such as, increase in teachers' salaries, scholarships, construction of buildings etc. The aid was to be given to those schools which imparted secular education and had good local management.

3.4.1 Transitional Period:

The British rule in NER during 18th century brought tremendous changes in social, educational and political life. The rigidity of the closed society during Ahom period become open

outside influx, destroying the old system of aristocracy and the new pattern of social system had come into existence. The British rule had destructive roles of old system and constructive roles of new system during their period.

The indigenous system of education or centre of Sanskrit education under the Brahmin teachers of the Ahom period was discontinued. The primary objective of introducing the Western Education was to make the young people fit for junior post in administration. The British Government gave little patronage towards the old system which did not contribute anything for mass educational movement. The British thought that the Western Education system alone could change or remove the orthodoxy and superstitions from the society. However, the Brahmin section was not happy at all and they had been disappointed. When the people showed their eagerness to learn, the government had to open primary schools in different parts of the NER.

3.4.2 Impact of Western Education in the NER:

The importance of the Western Education included scientific knowledge, which enabled the people to discard superstitions, magic power and sorcery for healing of sickness. The medical education had become popular among growing generation in spite of contempt
for the Hindu. The influence of the Western Education touched the grass-root of Hindu society and their way of life. The orthodox Brahmins began to send their children to schools having their half cut in the English Fashion and giving up the time-honoured custom of keeping a pig-tail.

The Christian Missionaries like Mrs. Brown, Cutter, Robinson and Barker had initiated for setting up schools for girls. The first girls school was established and opened at Sibsagar in 1840 and then at Nagaon and Guwahati consequently as stated earlier. However, many young girls of orthodox background had lost their privilege of attending schools and their social barrier had stood as obstacles to their freedom and progress. The missionaries had tried their best efforts to face the prevailing situation and to encourage female education. They went out into the highways and by-ways and sought the orphan and homeless. The response of the people was very poor.

Female education brought a new awareness of women status in society which had assumed great importance. Because of this awareness women could participate in the national struggle for freedom, remove the rigid forms of Sati System and the prohibition of Widow remarriage. The liberal ideas received through the Western Education made womenfolk particularly the
upper class, to invite an open challenge to the social attitude of men
towards women. Some of them had realised that liberation of women
from social prejudice was inseparable from the struggle for national
liberty of India.

3.4.3 The First Primary Education Act of Assam (1926):

The Hunter Commission of 1882 recommended the transfer of
primary schools to the local authorities and introduced the system
of payment by result, in giving grants to schools. This has adversely
affected the growth of primary education in Assam. Because the
standard of primary examination was very low. The policy followed
by Lord Curzon in the field of primary education gave an impetus
to the cause of primary education in Assam also and as a result, the
number of primary schools increased considerably. As a result of
Gokhale's attempt to convince the government the need of Compulsory
Primary Education in India and the Government of India's Resolution
of 1913, there was further expansion of primary education in Assam.
Education was transferred to the Indian Ministers, according to the
Government of India Act, 1919. The Provincial Governments felt the
necessity for universal education and passed Acts for the introduction
of compulsory primary education in their respective provinces.

The Government of Assam, therefore wanted to make primary education compulsory in the state, through the Local Boards and the Municipalities in phase manner. Accordingly, the first Primary Education Act of Assam was passed in 1926.\textsuperscript{21} This was the first attempt and the first Primary Education Act for making primary education compulsory in NER of India. On financial ground, however the Act was not enforced in any area in the province. The administrative control of primary schools was partly in the hands of the government and partly in the local body during the period of 1942-47. In Assam there were 9,884 primary schools (including Junior Basic), of which 8,420 are for boys and remaining 1,464 are for girls during 1946-47. The total number of pupils on rolls in the above primary schools were 5,06,056 comprising of 3,71,909 boys and 1,34,147 girls respectively.\textsuperscript{22}

\textbf{3.4.4 Development of Western Education in Manipur:}

Manipur forces helped the British during the Sepoy Mutiny in 1857 and in recognition of that Maharaja Chandrakirti Singh (1850-86), the then the ruler of Manipur, was presented a sword of honour, a belt and a dress. In recognition of another service to the British he was decorated with K.C.S.I.\textsuperscript{23} During his regime seven Political

\textsuperscript{21} Saikia, Op. cit. p.82.

\textsuperscript{22} Govt. of India:"Progress of Education in India 1947-52", Ministry of Education, New Delhi, 1954, p.49.

Agents successively posted in Manipur. They are: (i) Major W.Mc. Culloch, (ii) Dr. Dillon, (iii) Major W.Mc. Culloch (reinstate 2nd time), (iv) Dr. L. Brown, F.R.C.S., (v) Major General W.F. Nuthal, (vi) G.H. Damant (officiating), (vii) Sir James Johnstone. These Political Agents contributed to the cause of Western Education in Manipur from time to time. Among them Sir James Johnstone enable to laid Western Education successfully on the soil of Manipur.

3.4.5 Objection of Western Education in Manipur:

The first foundation of the present system of Western Education was laid down in Manipur by Captain Gordon (1835-44) the first Political Agent, during the period of East India Company, by establishing a primary school at Imphal, but it decayed without bearing any fruit as stated earlier.

In the field of Modern Education, Manipur, it appears, is a late starter. Until 1872, there was no primary school for formal education in Manipur. Again, a school was established and opened in Manipur at the suggestion of fifth Political Agent, Major General W.F. Nuthal with English language as medium of instruction in 1872. For this, the Government of Bengal presented books, maps and other requisites of the value of Rs. 400/- to Rs. 500/- for encouragement of primary education in Manipur. The people of the land did not


appreciate establishment of English School and the parents did not send their children to that school. The school did not function properly due to want of local co-operation and encouragement. Consequently attendance in the school was very poor. Thus, it also met the same fate as the earlier school of Captain Gordon. Then, the ruler of Manipur were reluctant to allow the introduction of English Education in Manipur and had resisted the moves of Sir James Johnstone the eighth Political Agent for sometime.26

3.4.6 Manipur on the Cross-road:

Manipuris were highly educated in their own style and loved to preserve their own religion and cultural heritage. People of that time feared that by getting English Education, they might be converted into christianity in the same manner as it happened when the Hindu Missionary "Shantidas" infiltrated into Manipur and converted the king and the people into Hindu. It may be recalled that king Garibniwaj, during the period of East India Company, was influenced by a Hindu Missionary Shantidas and converted the people into Baisnavism and their literatures were burnt as stated earlier. They could not use their own script in writing books and Bengali script was enforced as the King wished.

The Manipuris owe their primary allegiance to their traditional religion and economic concept. Even though they were converted to Baisnavism, they never discarded their former religion. So Manipuri Hindus followed two cults: (i) Sanamahi Leimaren Cult and (ii) Radha Krishna Cult. The educational sphere was also dominated by this spirit. The Manipuris, therefore, feared that introduction of English Education in Manipur would lead to the curtailment of their freedom and rights. They refused to take any kind of assistance given by the Englishmen to start English Education. So the Manipuri looked askance at the modern education and reluctant to attend the school. Many parents look down upon those children going to the English School. The boy who attended the English school was treated as an untouchable and not allowed to enter the house after school hours unless he had taken bath and changed his school dress. As a result of this feeling of untouchability, no English school could flourished on the soil of Manipur for a considerable length of time. Thus, the attempts of Captain Gordon (1835) and Major General W.F. Nuthal (1872) for imparting western education in Manipur compelled to fail.

3.4.7 Johnstone: The Founder of Western Education in Manipur:

In 1885, Sir James Johnstone (1877-1886) established an English School at Imphal within the campus of the present Governor of Manipur, the then Residency. The school was named after Sir James

Johnstone and it become to be known as Johnstone Higher Secondary School at present day. Johnstone Middle English School, which was closed down, at the advent of Khongjom War (1891), was reopened after the extension of the British (Crown) Rule in Manipur in the year 1892. The enrolment of the scholars in the school rose to 113, on 31st March 1893. Thus the introduction of formal education in Manipur started at the Johnstone School as an aided school, with effect from 1892-93. In this year, one primary school was established in Sekmai and another primary school was also established at Mao in the year 1893-94. Mr. Pettigrew came to Imphal in 1894, and established a school for boys at Singjamei. The people of Manipur acknowledged the contribution of Mr. Pettigrew for his patience, noble, sacrifice, friendliness, ideals and affection of children as his own sons. He tried his level best for development of primary education in Manipur.

First _girl's_ Lower Primary School was established at Moirangkhom on December 1899. On the very opening day of the school, 12 girls were admitted to the school and total number of girl scholars were 53 on the 31st March 1900. There were 15 primary schools of which 13 and 2 are in the valley and hill areas respectively. The number of primary schools rose to 18 with an enrolment of 1,425 students during 1901-1902. Thus Manipur entered formal education at the early part of the 20th century.
3.4.8 Department of Education in Manipur:

The influence of Western Education was very strong in Manipur at the beginning of the 20th century. The number of European visitors also increased by leaps and bound. The deep feeling of untouchability slowly disappeared. The missionaries become active in the hill areas. Thus the people of Manipur feels the necessity of English Education. As the modern education expanded gradually, there rose the need for setting up an administrative machinery and for this purpose the Department of Education was established in 1910. The post of Inspecting Pandit of schools was known as Sub-Inspector of Schools. The works of Inspector of Schools were carried by Political Agent. There was no separate establishment of education upto 1946. One Darbar Member acted as the Head Department of Education and he was assisted by one Deputy Inspector and two Inspecting Pandits, in his day-to-day works. The full-fledged Directorate of Education came into existence in Manipur only after independence which will be discussed in the chapters to follow.