CHAPTER I

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Education is commonly referred as the process of learning and obtaining knowledge at school, in a form of formal education. However, the process of education does not only start when a child first attends school. Education begins at home. One does not only acquire knowledge from a teacher; one can learn and receive knowledge from a parent, family member and home environment too. In fact, parents represent a considerable role in child’s education. There are stronger evidences that cultural characteristics and parental attitudes effect the educational attainment of children at school level education. If parents adopt good and effective attitudes with children at home, children make better progress in school. Moreover, parental supportive styles and attitudes not only influence child’s attainment level at school but also provide better help to students in the learning process. Furthermore, the parents must be able to supply not only the material requirements but also the psychological needs of the child. The psychological needs however vary from society to society, or from one culture to another. It depends on the social system which they have inherited whether Patriarchal, Matriarchal, Bilateral family etc.
Ralph Linton\textsuperscript{1} states that the individual’s personality is shaped by culture. What he actually means is that it is shaped by the experiences which he derives from his interaction with parents, siblings and the environment.

Hence, the parent – child relationship is so important that it shapes and moulds the character and personality of a child. The home is thus responsible for the development of human beings of a superior quality. If the home fails or mismanages this aspect, perhaps the products may be harmful to the society.

The family is the most nearly universal institution in human society. Its universality arises out of a capacity to serve the fundamental human needs of reproduction, child – protection, socialization of the young and economic function. The family is a human product, in no sense is it a product of nature.

Parental values like emphasis upon standards of excellence in achievements of children and actual parental involvement in children’s performance are reported as determining focus in achievement training of children.

1.1 ABOUT MEGHALAYA

As suggested by literal meaning of Meghalaya in Hindi – 'The Abode of Clouds', this state inaugurated as an autonomous state within Assam on April, 1970. It was declared a state of Indian Union on Jan. 21, 1972. Administratively, Meghalaya consists of seven districts namely, East Garo Hills, West Garo Hills, Jaintia Hills, East Khasi Hills, West Khasi Hills, Ri-Bhoi and South Garo Hills District. These are predominatly inhabited by the Khasis, the Jaintias and the Garos. These tribal communities are the descendants of very ancient people having distinctive traits and ethnic origin. The Khasi Hills and Jaintia Hills which form the central and eastern parts of Meghalaya is an imposing plateau with rolling grassland, hills and river valleys. The southern face of this plateau is marked by deep gorges and abrupt slopes, at the foot of which, a narrow strip of plain runs along the international border with Bangladesh.²

1.2 THE KHASIS

The people of Khasi tribal community primarily dwell in the north eastern state of Meghalaya. Amongst several tribes who have built their settlements here, the Khasis who are also known as 'Ki

Khasi,’ stand apart. The major concentration of the Khasi tribal community has been located in the north and eastern regions of Meghalaya constituting 50 percent of the total population of Meghalaya. The Khasi tribal community resides along the foot hills of Jaintia and Khasi Mountainous ranges, the Syntengs, or the Pnars.

The Khasi people belong to one of the earliest group of races migrating to the North East India.

1.2.1 Language

The present linguistic researches show that Khasi forms a group of the Mon-Khmer language which belongs to an Austro-Asiatic type. J.R.Logan in 1850-57 has brought to light some signifying results of his research. He discovered an intimate relation between Khasis and the Mon-Khmer-Palaung dialects which prevail in Burma an Indo-China and again this group is connected with a larger family which consists of Santal, Munda and Kurku. In particular, he was able by comparing vocabularies, to discover the nearest kinsmen of the Khasis in the Palaung, a tribe inhabiting one of the Shan States. Logan further remarks that the Khasis and other Mon-Khmer tribes greatly differ in physical

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characteristics from the Munda. He speaks of Khasi as “a solitary remembrance that the Mon-Cambodian linguistic formation once extended much further towards North-West than now”.  

1.2.2 Family Organisation

The mother is the custodian of family rites and a family priestess, although the task of sacrifice and other religious celebrations of the house devolve upon the male inmates. She makes ready all the accessories for the religious offerings. The mother, the maternal uncle and the father are revered as the makers of the clan. The maternal uncles i.e. the mother’s brothers act as preceptors of their nephews. Children, therefore, receive guidance both from the father and the maternal uncle.

1.2.3 The Position of a Man

In Khasi tradition, a man is U Nongda (protector) and a woman Ka Nongri ling (keeper of the house), the custodian of family property. In his Kur’s (mother’s clan) family he has the position of U Kni (uncle i.e. counsellor), at his wife’s house, he is the father. The mother’s claims to return all the articles he took, from her to his wife, at the time of or

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5 Bareh, op. cit., p.15.
6 Ibid., p.290.
after his marriage, are not so binding although still observed by orthodox villagers. A man also takes a portion of his Kamai Nongkhynraw (bachelor’s earnings) to his wife. In a few cases, the husband even stays with his mother until the birth of a first child, after which he assumes parental responsibility at his wife’s place. But this depends on other factors like his wife’s staying with her mother, the mother often helping her daughter to bring up the baby. A married man may transfer a part of his income to his mother. His wife, if she works, may also give a part of her income to her mother. If a man undertakes business with his wife’s capital, he does not give this income to his mother, though he might help her on certain occasions.7

1.2.4 Inheritance

Mother kinship is dominant and inheritance is matrilineal. The tribe is conglomerate of clans, each tracing lineage from the ancestral mother, the founder of the clan. The mother is the custodian of family rites and property, she is succeeded by her youngest sister who becomes the keeper of the properly and the organizer of the family rites in which she can improve the pattern of this residence but cannot part it off.

Thus a form of ultimogeniture survives. Her elder sisters also secure shares of inheritance in the form of landed or family property,

7 Bareh, op. cit., p.301.
jewelleries and ornament, vessels and other articles of household furniture and goods, but largest share (including the mother's residential house) is hers. The elder sisters generally move with their respective husbands, but the youngest daughter's husband stays in her residence, the customs being matrilocal whether temporary or permanent. In the event there is a single daughter, she will get the entire property. If there be no daughter the ancestral residence goes to the elder sister's lineage, but if the woman has become clanless, a girl is adopted and becomes integrated into the family kinship pattern, inheritance thereby being reverted in her person to the same group.

There are however exceptions as modern trends indicate. The self-acquired property of the couple, discernible from the ancestral one, may be entitled to a son or shared among the sons if there be no daughter in the house. In another case capital may have been provided by the mother to her son in case his wife is poor for establishing himself and his family. Again wealthy parents do give shares to their sons although in smaller proportions against the larger reserved for the daughter and entitling such recipients to transmit the properly thus bequeathed to his wife's kinship lineage.  

The youngest daughter is strictly the custodian but not possessor of family property. She might dispose of some articles of property but

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8 Joshi, op. cit., p.188.
not the ancestral residence. She performs religious household ceremonies. Yet her greater duty is to take care of her aged parents. She is in charge of the family sepulchres. In Christian families, she still exercises her moral duties and obtains the biggest portion although she has no longer real religious duties to perform. But she acts under limits since she cannot go against the decision of her maternal uncles or family council under whose advice she carries out her duties. The exercise of powers by males generally is not so vital in many cases today. Her uncles or, failing them, her elder brothers in the original customs, act as her counsellors and give instructions for the good behaviour of her children, in addition to performing their duties in bringing up their children with their respective wives. The residential house of the youngest daughter is not counted as her private or personal property, it is an ancestral property. The youngest daughter’s house forms a meeting place of her kith and kin. She is bound to take care of her unmarried brothers and sisters. She is the guardian of the parentless and homeless members of her family; the mother acts as a moral force to unite the family, the spiritual head.9

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9 Joshi, op. cit., pp.189-190.
1.2.5 Marriage

Elaborate marriage are preceded by betrothals in which the would-be-groom accompanied by close relations from both the mother’s and father’s side, proceed to the bride’s house and in the presence of representatives from the would-be-bride’s side, a ceremony is performed symbolized by the handing over of a ring to the bride by a groom. But cases are reported where an exchange of rings is also practiced at some place. Avuncular representatives from both sides cite mutual addresses as of reciprocal form that no clan taboo persists among the two houses which qualifies the proposed marriage to take place.

The marriage is performed at the bride’s place.10

1.2.6 Traditional Systems of Education

Before the arrival of the Christian missionaries, there was no formal education among the Khasis. However, every Khasi home is an informal agency imparting moral education through folk songs, pastoral melodies, proverbs, maxims and so on. Traditions, beliefs and know­how were handed down from one generation to another by words of mouth only. Folk tales and stories centred round things and objects seen conspicuously in nature relating them to the events and experiences of

10 Joshi, op. cit., p.192.
human life. The stories are told not only for amusement but also for the purpose of giving moral lessons, advice and instructions to the children.

1.2.7 Perception of Home life

The perception of home life by Khasi boys and girls as identified in the study of Warjri showed significant results. The Khasi girls usually posses a strong sense of belongingness with the family as compared to boys. In other words, girls showed a positive tendency towards belongingness with the family while boys on the other hand are negatively thinking about it. It was also found that Khasi boys did not posses and enjoy the same status at home as girls did. Parents preferred to delegate family responsibilities to daughters than to sons.\(^{11}\)

1.3 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

Education could be seen as wings for the progress of the human being. It helps the individual to attain intellectual, physical and spiritual or emotional progress. The Khasis does not have any formal education before. It was during the British rule when Rev. Thomas Jones believed

that the best way to achieve his mission of converting the people to Christianity was by teaching them to read the Bible and other Christian literature in their own language.

The Khasis being the long surviving matrilineal society may have different viewpoints in educating their children, it may be assumed that girls in such a society are getting more advantages than boys in every sphere of activity. Therefore, in the matter of upbringing the children, girls are placed on a different footing specially treated with affection which is not so with the boys.

As property and family responsibilities are given to the girls, differences would arise in the perception of the parents towards their sons and daughters. Due to this biasness, parents would have different attitudes towards educational requirements of sons and daughters.

Therefore the present study attempts to find out the provision of educational opportunities of the Khasi parents to their sons and daughters.
1.4 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Keeping in view the significance of the problem, it was decided to conduct a study on:

“Provision of Educational Opportunities to Boys & Girls in Khasi Society - A Study”.

1.5 DEFINITION OF THE TERMS USED

The following are the operational definitions of the terms used in this study:

(a) Provision is the act of supplying something.

(b) Educational Opportunities refers to favourable or good chance for education.

(c) Khasi Society is an organised group or community of the Khasis.
1.6 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Stating the objectives of the study is one of the most important tasks of a researcher. Therefore, the present study is proposed to have the following specific objectives:

1. To find out the educational opportunities provided by Khasi parents towards boys and girls.

2. To find out the perceptions of Khasi boys and girls on the parental attitudes towards them.

3. To find out the difference between the perceptions of Khasi boys and girls on their parental attitudes regarding their educational needs.

4. To offer suggestions.

1.6.1 Hypothesis of the Study

H1: There is no significant difference between the perceptions of Khasi boys and girls on their parental attitudes regarding their educational needs.
1.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study is limited to the fifty households in the four localities present in and around Shillong. The selected localities were the following –

i) Fifteen households from Lawjynriew, a locality at Nongthymmai,

ii) Fifteen households from Nongdaneng, a locality at Laitkor,

iii) Ten households from Nonglum, a locality at Mawlai and

iv) Ten households from Nongkseh, a locality at Laimer.

There was non-availability of a standardized tool to measure the educational opportunities provided by parents to their children. The tool had to be constructed by the investigator.

1.8 ORGANISATION OF THE STUDY

This research study consists of five chapters. A brief review of related studies is given in chapter two. The chapter three deals with Methodology followed in this research study. It consists of the research method, construction of the tool, sample selected and the procedure of data collection. Analysis and interpretation of the data are presented in the chapter four. Chapter five presents the findings, suggestions and
educational implications and chapter six gives a brief summary and conclusion of the study. Bibliography and appendices are given at the end.