Chapter IV

CONTRIBUTION OF THE CHRISTIAN MISSIONARIES TOWARDS EDUCATION

The relation of Manipur with the English people started long back. E.W. Dun (1886) says, "The invasion of Manipur by Alimpra must have been most disastrous to the inhabitants of that country, as they then, for the first time, sought external aid and appeared a few years after as supplicants for British protection. Oogut Shah, having been expelled from the throne two years before the invasion of Alimpra, appears from the communications of Mr Verelst, who was then Chief of Chittagong, in the course of the year 1762, to have endeavoured to interest the British Government in his behalf ... 1 This statement indicates that the relation of the British started with Manipur in the year 1762 on account of the attack by a foreign power, and to defend themselves they took the help of the British and in this way Manipuris came in touch with the British. In this connection a treaty was signed. In the words of E.W. Dun (1886), "A treaty of alliance, offensive and defensive, was negotiated on the 14th September 1762 with Hurree Doss Gossein, on behalf of his master Jase Sing, by Mr Verelst, in which aid of a contingent of British troops was promised, whenever the Raja might find it expedient to attempt the recovery of such portions of his territory as had been rested from him by the Burmese; and he promised, in return to make such grants of land to the English as might suffice for the establishment of a factory and a distance of country round such factory and fort, of 8000 cubits, free of rent for ever." The above statement indicates the beginning of the relations of the

1. Dun, E.W., Gazetteer of Manipur (1975)
British. The relations went on developing by fighting a common enemy, till 1891.

The missionaries came to Manipur in the year 1894 and they were allowed to work only in some hill areas. In the words of F. S. Downs (1969), "First there were government restrictions. Only two missionaries were allowed in the state (after 1917) and they were not permitted to enter certain areas of the hills. Evangelistic work on the plains was restricted." In this way the work in the valley by the missionaries was slower than in the hills. It was so because the rulers were quite indifferent to the western education. In the words of R. Brown (1873), "The king did not have much relations with the Political Agents on social grounds. They (political agents) were never invited to the religious functions organised by the king." Moreover, those who did not embrace Vaishnavism went to the hills or other remote areas and settled there. Later on, the same people were called tribals or 'How' by the valley people. For these people there were no schools to enlighten them. Sir James Johnstone observes (1886), "There was no school on regular in Manipur till 1885. Most of the king's officials did not know to read and write." He further observes about education in the state that it was confined to some privileged people, "Learning was confined mainly to the traditional priestly class and the Brahmins."

Shri N. Khelchandra says in an interview about the early educational system in Manipur, "In the local system of education,

3. Johnstonre, James, My Experiences in Manipur and Nagaland
the pupils had to go to the house of Maichous (scholars) for learning scriptures. In this period the scriptures were written on Bhojpatra or leaves of palm trees. On it they conveyed all subjects like history, astronomy, moral instructions, religion, fine arts, etc. In hills the education was imparted and they got instruction in practical training in military science, administration arts, culture, religious and customary laws in their village Mrungas or the Dormitories.⁴

The first attempts for western education were made by the Political Agent Captain Gorden and he maintained it at his own expense till his death. In the words of Captain E.W. Dun (1886), "An English school was established in Manipur nearly 50 years ago by the then Political Agent Captain Gorden and maintained at his own expense; it was very successful, but was not carried on after his death. After ceasing for years, an English school is again being started; the Raja is giving the building which is now being erected in the Residency ground, and the Assam Government gives grant-in-aid. The Raja and others will subscribe. There is every prospect of it being successful."⁵ In this way education (western) started in Manipur, but institutions were closed on account of non-availability of students. Again attempt was done by Major General W.F. Nuthall in 1872. In the words of E.W. Dun (1886), "... In 1872 a vernacular school was established in Manipur at the suggestion of the late Political Agent, Major-General W.F. Nuthall, and the government of Bengal presents books and maps, & c, to the value of

⁴ Interview on 3.7.72
⁵ Dun, E.W., Gazetteer of Manipur (1975)
rupees 400 or 500, but for want of encouragement on the part of the authorities, it has been nearly closed. Some few boys attend occasionally. The Manipuri prefers remaining ignorant. So illiterate are they, that some of the highest officials can neither read nor write, and are not a whit ashamed for their want of knowledge." In this way English schools died a natural death due to the lack of encouragement by the authorities. Sir James Johnstone took keen interest to introduce western education and he negotiated for it with General Thangal." As a result, a school was opened, which was named as Johnstone Middle School. This school was closed during the disturbance of 1881 for some time. In 1892, after the fall of Imphal, this school was again opened. By this time western education started getting popularity and in Imphal more and more boys and girls started seeking admission to this school. After getting proper footing on the soil of Manipur, the British administration allowed the missionaries to function here. In the earlier instance only two missionaries were allowed as has been stated earlier by E.W. Downs (1969) to function in hilly areas. The pioneer in this field was Reverend William Pettigrew, a Christian missionary. He can be rated as the father of western education in the hills of Manipur. As stated earlier, the activities of missionaries were directed towards hills. In the words of F.S. Downs (1969), "The missionaries activities were directed towards the people inhabiting the hill areas. They are Tangkhul Nagas, Kukis, Rongmai Nagas and Mao Nagas." By Christianising Nagas, it was a problem to impart instruction to

then. It could only be done by teaching them English. At this stage teaching of English became unavoidable to the 'hilly' people. F.S. Downs says, "To become true Christians the Nagas willingly learned English. They opened several Christians schools all over Manipur except the valley. Since the early 1920s, Manipur has been divided into two fields with one missionary in charge of each. Pettigrew and Crozier both worked together for some time but personal antagonism led them to divide Manipur into two spheres of influence." In this way the western education, which was purely religious, was introduced into the hills by the Christian Missionaries. Their field of work went on expanding and later on both Pettigrew and Crozier divided their areas. In the words of F.S. Downs, "Pettigrew supervised the North East and the area North of Imphal up to the Nagaland border (Sadar) regions for the spread of education in the tribals. Crozier did this job in North west. Pettigrew worked in Tangkhul and Mao Nagas and Crozier amongst Kukis for the spread of education. Both of them learned the dialects spoken amongst the tribes." It fastened the cause of education and the spread of the Christianity amongst Nagas and Kukis. Due to spread of education several tribes came to understanding and formed an association. F.S. Downs says, "The first meeting of association took place at Saikul village of Kukis under the name of North-West Association." In 1946 this association was divided. At a meeting held in Pudnamai village predominantly Mao North Sadar Association was formed. It also

9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
included Maram and some Kuki Churches. The remnants were called by the name of South Sadar Association which included Anal, Kom, Chiru, Moyan and Kuki. The Headquarters for the spread of Christianity remained at Ukhrul. Here Pettigrew established one Christian Middle English School and several primary schools.

In the hills the progress in education took place by the joint efforts of the missionaries and the government but the lion's share went to the missionaries. In 1857 after Indian mutiny and also after submission of Wood's Despatch, the missionaries found that the government had not withdrawn from the field of education in spite of their recommendations of Wood's Despatch. They were much disheartened and thus they intensified their activities in the north eastern area. They got tremendous success in the tribal area of North Eastern Region. Missionaries brought light and learning to these people. In Mao at that time there were 7 schools, two of them were opened in this year. In the next year the number of the hill schools rose to 9 against 7 last year. In the Tangkhul and Kuki areas in the year 1906-07, there were 6 schools in Tangkhul area and 4 in Kuki areas. In the year 1909-10 there was one Middle English School in Ukhrul and 8 primary schools and 5 schools in Kuki areas. The missionaries were more interested in opening a Church while the government was interested in opening more schools. The government encouraged the missionaries for their activities. They could function in an area when the permission was given by the government. For two years the number of the schools did not grow and it remained constant like the back years. In the year 1903, the number of the Middle English Schools doubled in Ukhrul and it became 2 and on the whole the primary schools in Tribal areas were
228 against 8 in the year 1923. It means 3½ times progress was registered in 10 years. It can be rated as quite satisfactory progress seeing the hazardous field of work. One has to face several odds in bringing the development in this area. In the year 1925 one more primary school was opened at Kangpokpi. In the year 1926-27, in the hill areas, there were 38 government managed primary schools, 31 were lower primary schools which were managed by the mission, 24 were managed by the North East India general mission. It shows that missions efforts were more sincere than those of the government 55 schools were managed by the mission while government managed only 38. In the year 1927-28, a few mission schools were closed down due to the non-availability of the students and their number remained 47 against 55, but in the year 1928-29, it again rose to 29 against 23 there were last year in case of North East India General Mission. In 1931-32, there were one mission middle English school and 37 lower primary schools. It means addition of another 5 schools in 5 years duration. It means again one school per year. Another remarkable thing is that North East India mission opened another middle school at Churaohandpur. In 1932-33, another entrant in the missionary race was American Baptist Mission. They opened one lower primary school and one Upper school at Ukhrul. On the whole the government managed lower primary schools were 55 and lower primary schools managed by mission were 35. In comparison to the previous year the number of the schools had gone down.

Besides this, North East India General Mission was having one middle school located at Churaohandpur, one girls school and 22 village

11. N.E.I.G. Mission, Churachandpur
In the following year, i.e., 1933-34, the number of primary schools came down to 27 as against 35 of the previous year, and the village lower primary schools managed by the North East India General Mission also showed some improvement from 22 to 27. In 1934-35, the number of the mission schools remained 24 against 27 of the previous year.

In 1936-37, the government L.P. schools were 54 against 60 of the previous year. The number of mission managed primary schools also went up to 37 against 24 of the preceding year. In the case of North East India General Mission we see an improvement. They opened 33 Upper primary schools and 35 Lower primary schools. In the case of the lower primary schools there was improvement from 27 to 35. In 1938-39 the government L.P. schools remained constant like last year as also Upper primary schools. In the case of the mission schools we do not see any improvement in this year.

In 1939-40 we note that schools also came up in Tamenglong district - 22 lower primary schools and in Ukhrul district one Upper primary and 2 lower primary and 16 village schools and in Tamenglong one Upper primary, 2 lower primary and 15 village schools.

By 1916 there were 400 Churches associated with Baptist Mission of U.S.A. according to Mr Pettigrew. Most of these Churches were having attached schools imparting instructions in

Bible. In the Ukhrul school, there had been some trouble. The teachers refused to serve under the Meithei headmaster Poromsing whom they accused of high-handed ways with the hillmen. Half of the school staff was suspended and a new headmaster appointed, but it did not settle the problem. It was later disclosed that the headmaster and the teachers were engaging themselves in immoral activities. Poromsingh was reappointed (Page 164, A Brief History).

In this year the mission centre shifted from Ukhrul to Kangpokpi and it remained a sub-centre, and the middle school continued to get the support. At this time in Manipur only Ukhrul and Kangpokpi schools got financial assistance from the mission while other schools were self-supporting. These schools were getting sufficient assistance in the shape of donation. In 1920 a Tangkhul named R. Luichumhao was appointed as headmaster of Ukhrul middle school. He was the first member of the tribe to get education. He came from Somdal village in western Tangkhul area. He was admitted in this school in the year 1905 and in 1909 he was baptised. From 1913 to 1915 he studied at the Jorhat High School and then went to Shillong. He went to France in Labour Corpse and on his return he passed high school and took over as headmaster of the Ukhrul school. He was extremely active in the spread of education and opening new Churches. As the number of Christians grew the literacy also went on growing. The growth of Christians was not rapid due to the obstacles created by the other agencies including the government in the valley. Missionaries did their best in driving out illiteracy, disease, and ignorance of the tribal people. They brought modern light to them. They taught them how to wear dress and how to clean their body. Their devotion won the love of the tribal people. They
preferred to become Christians because they felt that there was somebody to care for them. When they were ill the missionaries went to treat them as at that time there was no government hospital to look after them. In 1970 at the time of Republic day, the leader of the dancing party was interviewed. He gave the impression that the missionaries have done wonderful job in bringing civilization to the hill area. He was very sure that the government had stopped the activities of the missionaries in his area. He said that he wanted more and more missionaries to come to Manipur to spread the message of light. Another troop was from Tamenglong area where Christianity had not taken that much of root as in other areas.

The king of a village said that in his village there is no school, no light and no facility of treatment for the patients. He further told that the nearest dispensary is about 10 miles and the way is also hazardous to reach the hospital. He further added that hills are neglected. He welcomed the accession of his kingdom into the Indian Union, with the hope of betterment of the people but up to now nothing has been done in this respect.

Pettigrew was well respected in the official quarters and he did a wonderful job in opening the schools in hills and valley. He could persuade the administration for meeting the demand of the people. In 1926, the Tangkhul New Testament was published in Manipuri language. It was sold like hot-cakes. The people were prepared to pay any price for it. In the year 1950, there were 10,000 members of the Church. Most of them could read and write. In the year 1919 there was confrontation between Kukis and the government. In it the Kukis were defeated. In this connection
F.S. Downs says, "In a sense the defeat of the rebels was more than a defeat at arms. It was a defeat of the old way of life." It attracted the Kukis towards Christianity and most of them got converted to it in the hope of better future and life. After this turbulent period, the people also wanted peace. The gospel of Christ brought a welcome word of peace and brotherhood to the people so recently ravaged by war. It might be possible that they were influenced by the fact that the Christianity was the religion of the conquerors. Such considerations are important to a warrior people. In this way the dawn of modern civilization began to smile on the tribal people of Manipur. Many schools were opened by the missionaries as it is discussed in detail previously. Two events of the early years are remembered by Kuki Christians as having disrupted their development; the school strike at Kangpokpi and the resignation of Crozier in 1932. The school strike was caused by the tribals sensitivity about the headmaster. He was a man from the plain. Many of the students were older than the headmaster and resented his attitude of treating them like the children. At the beginning of 1924, the students went on strike, demanding the removal of the headmaster.

The Maos themselves were strongly opposed to Christianity. This was an attitude we have already expressed in relation to Pettigrew when he wanted to establish a centre there in 1895. In 1903 Pettigrew had nevertheless been successful in starting a lower Primary School at Mao village in his capacity as State Inspector of Schools. In this school he did not allow them to teach Christianity.

The instructions were without religion. Spread of Christianity in Mao started from superstition, ignorance and illiteracy. It also helped them to join the main stream of nations life.

Prof. P. Hungyo says, "This area (Manipur) has been a plague by the cult of violence ... The policy of the Government is to integrate the "tribals" into the mainstream of Indian life and this step has been intensified in recent years. But since the introduction of the 'Innerline Regulation of 1873' which is still operative for the foreigners and Indian civilians from outside are not permitted in these tribal regions. Foreign missionaries were banned since 1954." This is the observation of Prof. Hungyo about the outsiders in Manipur. About the spread of Christianity he says, "Christianity came to tribal people of this region in the second half of the 19th century through the Missionaries from various parts of the world ... In Manipur Rev. William Pattigrew started works by establishing a lower primary school at Sinjamei, Imphal in 1894. But owing to acute hostility of the Meitei Hindus and Government strictures he had to move to the tribal areas. In 1896 he established the mission centre at Ukhrul in Thangkhul Naga area and started works through establishment of schools."

Illiteracy and ignorance have been the characteristic features of the tribal people. But with the advent of Christianity, the literacy percentage among the tribals are one of the highest in India and it is 50.01% whereas the all India figures is only 33.7%. "

14. Hungyo, P., Evangelism and Education among the tribals group in North East India, paper submitted to Christian Conference in Kulalumpur in June 1977

15. Ibid., p. 9
About the Christianity and Education Prof. Hungyo says, "In fact there is a tendency to identify Christianity with Education. For wherever the Missionary went, they started schools, taught hygiene, and carpentry. When the first Missionary came, these tribal groups have no written script or literature. Traditions say that they had their script written in some 'animal skin' which was eaten up by the dog. North East India has perhaps the largest concentration of tribal entities in the world and the first Christian missionaries found themselves in the diverse multilingual situation of the 'Tower of Babel'. It took many years before they could communicate to the people. People were first taught to read and write in Roman language. This helped the tribal people to attain literacy in their own language as well as a fair amount of knowledge of English ... The contribution of Missionaries to education was so great that Rev. William Pettigrew was appointed the honorary Inspectors of schools by the government of Manipur. Sir Bumfield, the then Governor of Assam was so impressed by the educational works of the Rev. Edwin Rowland in Lushai hills that all the states schools were converted into mission schools, and grants were given only to the mission schools. This continued till 1952 from 1904.16 This indicates as to how much popularity mission schools got and the government was pleased to accord the sanction of the grant to the missionaries schools. The total population of tribal Christians is 32% of the total population.

The missionaries activities were in full swing till 1950 but they were asked to stop their work of spreading Christianity

16. Hungyo, P., op.cit., p. 10
after 1951-52. In the words of Prof. P. Hungyo (1977), "The government of India stopped the work of Christianity and they were asked to pack off. The withdrawal of missionaries slowed the movement of literacy campaign."

This missionaries altogether managed more than 200 primary and middle schools before 1950 according to N.I.E. Mission Churachandpur. Now they have 4 mission schools up to high school level in the valley, 4 in Churachandpur, 3 in Ukhurul, 2 in Tinopal, 4 in Mao and one in Tamenglong district. Their number do not exceed more than 25 at present. The exact figures, mission failed to give due to various denominations of the Church service. At present whatever schools are run, they are well maintained by the Church authorities. In valley Don Bosco, Little Flower, Nirmala bas and M.G. Mission schools are good and well maintained.

17. Interview
18. N.I.E. Mission Churachandpur