CHAPTER VIII

EDUCATION OF THE BACKWARD COMMUNITIES
Ever since the annexation of Assam, the British authorities came in contact with the neighbouring tribes who occupied the hills on either sides of the valley of Brahmaputra. Although most of these tribes were brought under the sphere of British influence, the local authorities showed little or no interest towards these mountaineers since many of them continued to be hostile and their territories were almost impenetrable. In the beginning, the Government was content to leave them in their hills and fastnesses excepting occasional punitive expeditions or in establishing a few military outposts to punish the tribes for raiding or massacring British subjects.

Nevertheless, David Scott, Agent to the Governor-General, North-East Frontier was alive to the question of diffusing Christian education among the Garos whose barbarous condition was a source of constant danger to British possessions. To redeem these tribes from their backwardness, on 5 June, 1826, he submitted a plan to the Government of Bengal. It envisaged, (1) that a European in the character of Missionary and apothecary should be stationed at Singimari or some other convenient place in the district of Goalpara for converting the Garos to Christianity; (ii) that a school for the education of the Garo boys through Bengali should be placed under the superintendence of a Missionary; (iii) that the expense of these establishments, estimated to rupees eight thousand, should be defrayed from the surplus collections
derivable from the Garo markets after deducting the expense of the police and revenue establishments of the district. He contemplated that the encouragement of civilised habits among these hill people would be rewarded with great results. The means of education within their reach would gradually elevate their minds from superstition and ultimately bringing them to receive with sincerity the doctrine of the Christian faith. The accomplishment of moral change in the distinct tribes and races would be a connecting link with the Government, and it would enable gradually to place the vast hill areas of Assam to the domain of the British rulers.

The Vice-President in Council agreeing with the suggestions of Scott resolved on 12 October, 1826, to establish a school and a chapel at Singimari upon the general principles and plans recommended by the Lord Bishop of Calcutta and to place it under the general supervision of a Missionary. On the recommendation of Bishop Heber, Valentine William Hurley who was then apothecary to the European Invalid Establishment at Chunar, was appointed the school-master on a salary of rupees two hundred per mensem. Assisted by a local teacher, he started the work of imparting instruction in reading and writing in the Bengali character in Garo language. Provision

1. F.P.P., 1846; 14 March, Nos. 48-49, Agent, Governor-General to the Officiating Secretary, Government of India, 25 November, 1845.
2. Ibid
was also made to give instruction in English only to the
intelligent pupils. Hurley had to resign in October 1827,
'being too much depressed at the dismal prospect of residing
with the savages'. James Fermie, a junior teacher in the
Hindu College of Calcutta, was later appointed with a higher
salary of rupees three hundred per month. In July 1828, he
proceeded to his station; but insalubrity of the climate
proved fatal to him and he died on 19 November, 1828. Scott
decided then to keep up the school under a Bengalee Assistant;
but the wild and superstitious people in the hills thought
that their Deities being offended in their advance in learning
had caused all these untoward events. Scott, therefore,
suggested to the Government of Bengal that no successor
should be appointed until the time might arrive for carrying
into effect the intended arrangements for the Missionary
establishment.

THE BAPTISTS IN ASSAM:

Soon after his assumption of office of the Agent
to the Governor-General North-East Frontier, Major Jenkins

4. F.P.P., 1846; 14 March, Nos. 48-49, Secretary, Government
of Bengal to the Commissioner of the North-East part of
Rangpur.

5. F.P.P., 1846; 14 March, Nos. 48-49; vide extract of the
Despatch to the Court of Directors, 2 February, 1828,

6. Ibid.
felt that the backward hill people were really in need of a spiritual reformation and education. With this object in view he sent an invitation to Reverend W.H. Pearce, the American Baptist Missionary in Calcutta. The latter being unable to occupy the field at that time, addressed the American Missionaries in Burma who accepted the call with the object of labouring among the Shans and the Khamptis lying between Burma and Assam which had not yet been visited by any Missionary. Accordingly, Nathan Brown and Oliver Cutter were deputed to undertake the project. They arrived at Sadiya on 23 March, 1836; and under their supervision a school house was built and classes started in June in that year. At the beginning, instruction was limited to scriptures with the object of enlightening the minds of the children and weakening their heathen notions and prejudices. Soon the Missionaries found that Sadiya was not the proper place to teach the Shans; their attention was naturally turned to the people of the plains. Reverends Thomas and Bronson with

their wives and a printing press sailed from Boston on 17 October, 1836, and arrived at Sadiya on 17 July, 1837.

The Missionaries found that the Assamese, the ruling class of the Valley of Bramaputra, had very rigid caste rules with dominant priesthood and weak conception of sin. They realised that the propagation of any new system of religious education or usages would be possible only amongst the people of hills and low castes of Assam who had never adopted the Brahminical religion. Amongst the latter the standard of morality being extremely low and the sense of right and wrong also of the feeblest kind, propagation of Christian education to these neglected people was rather easier. Therefore, the Missionaries concentrated their activities amongst the low castes in the plains and the wild and backward tribes in the hill areas of Assam.

Even in this limited sphere, the pioneers had to confront with immense difficulties. Habituated to pastoral or agricultural pursuits, these people had no ambition to enter into Government service nor had any feeling of inferiority to their neighbours in the plains. In fact they were contended with their backward condition and were indifferent to education of any kind. Another serious difficulty was

12. Dana, M.A.; Between Two Centuries, P. 64.
the variations in the dialects of the hill people. Therefore, every Missionary society had to learn the indigenous dialects and languages and then began to impart instruction either through the medium of the language of a particular tribe or through Bengali or Assamese.

SCHOOLS UNDER MISSION:

In January, 1840, Reverend Bronson along with Mr. Brown decided to establish a Mission to impart religious instruction to the Nagas. He was encouraged by the local officers like Mr. Bruce and Captain Hannay, Commandant of Assam Light Infantry, who contributed rupees five hundred and rupees two hundred and fifty respectively. With this amount Bronson commenced his works at Namsang, a village near Jaipur. But, one year's experience proved futility of his plan. Ill health and loss of one member of his family compelled him to quit the hills and to concentrate his activities in Nowgong where in 1842, three schools were opened under his supervision. After two years, Brown and Oliver Cutter also established fourteen schools in Sibsagar. Later, five more schools were set up in Kamrup under Reverend Barker of the American Baptist Mission.

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Apart from these, in 1841 Reverend Lish of Welsh Calvinistic Mission started several vernacular schools for the pupils of Khasi-Jayantia Hills at Cherrapunji, Mawsmai and Mawmhut. In 1842, Thomas Jones, who succeeded Reverend Lish, decided to instruct the Khasi children and adults in the principles of Christian religion through their mother tongue and to make use of the Khasis to teach their fellow countrymen. Moreover, for the orphans and destitutes, boarding schools were established in Nowgong, Gauhati and Sibsagar. Pupils were educated with the object of qualifying them as competent teachers for newly established Mission schools. In addition to these, two English schools, one in Nowgong, and one in the Khasi-Jayantia Hills were also established by the Missionaries.

American Baptists had the credit of starting schools for girls in Assam. Since parents of respectable rank were unwilling to allow their daughters to proceed to the house of a stranger for the purpose of receiving instruction, the Missionaries started schools with low caste girls. In 1844, the first school of this kind was established at Sibsagar by

17. Morris, J.H.; The History of the Welsh Calvinistic Methodist Foreign Mission to the end of the year 1904, P.74
18. Ibid.; P.80
Mrs. Cutter and Mrs. Brown; this was followed by two other girls schools at Nowgong and Gauhati. Besides, Bronson had also a Girls' Boarding School of thirteen scholars and Mrs. Barker had a Eurasian girls' class of three scholars at Nowgong and Gauhati respectively. In all these schools, pupils were instructed in the common elementary branches of English education. Most of them committed the catechism to memory and were able to answer the question in the first principles of Christianity. In the meantime, Mrs. Lewis opened the first girls' school in Khasi-Jayantia Hills. Despite prejudices of the Khasis — that every female who touched a book would be childless — Mrs. Lewis succeeded in having a class with fourteen girls receiving instruction in 'Mother's Gift' and 'Christian Instructor'.

Conversion to Christianity sometimes resulted in loss of means of livelihood of those who were connected with Hindu worship. Sometimes the converts were persecuted by their relatives and caste groups on account of their conversion and were also excluded from their paternal

21. B.E.P., 1845; 17 September, No. 32; Robinson to Jenkins, 8 June, 1845.
professions. Therefore, it was imperative that instruction in some art or occupation in life, whether belonging to the field or to the workshop, should be given to them as a means to earn their livelihood. With these objects in view Bronson established an industrial school at Namsang and one at Nowgong. In the orphan Institution of Nowgong such trades and employments as would enable them to become useful members of society were prescribed in the school curriculum, and through these classes the local industries were developed.

THE DESPATCH OF 1854:

Despite their untiring efforts, the Missionaries could not achieve so much as was expected. In 1853, Reverend Lewis found that in Khasia Hills no regard was paid to education, though the Missionaries offered inducements by giving prizes in money and books. The local chiefs neither extended help to the Missionaries nor showed any example to the people; on the contrary, chiefs like those of Jowai and Cherra were hostile to the education of their people.

25. B.E.P., 1845; 17 September, No. 32; Robinson to Jenkins, 8 June, 1845.
Nevertheless, in pursuance of the recommendation of the Despatch of 1854, grant-in-aid was extended to Missionary institutions. In 1854, a grant of rupees fifty a month was made to the Welsh Presbyterian Mission of Khasi-Jayantia Hills for the payment of the teachers and purchase of books. For the purpose of establishing schools among the Kacharis in Darrang, rupees fifty per month was also sanctioned in 1854. Three schools among the Kacharis and Miris were opened in Darrang under the superintendence of C.H.Hesselmeyer, a Missionary of the 'Society for the Propagation of Gospel'. In Garo Hills, extending over the whole length of the district of Goalpara parallel with the Brahmaputra, there was a cordon of stations at which the Garo hats or markets were held. In these hats Dobhasls or interpreters were employed by the Government for helping the Garos and the Bengalee traders in communicating with one another in the hat days; on other days, these interpreters were required to collect together as many hill people


29. A.S., Letters issued to the Government; Vol.No. 19,1854; Jenkins to the Under Secretary, Government of Bengal, 7 July, 1854, No. 64.

30. A.S., Letters issued to the Government; Vol. No. 19(a), January to September 1855; Jenkins to Under Secretary, Government of Bengal, 18 May, 1855, No. 75.

31. Ayerst Jum, W.; Proposal to establish a Mission to the Garrows; P.47.
as possible and to instruct them in Bengali; for this additional work they were paid at the rate of rupees two per month. In 1855, Captain Agnew, the Principal Assistant and collector of Goalpara, with a view to promoting education among the Garos proposed that the system of engaging Garo interpreters attached to the hats should be abolished, and from the saving thus effected an increased pay at the rate of rupees eight per month should be granted to the mohurrers already attached to the hats. These mohurrers should act as school masters at places where they resided and the interpreters who were inferior to them in wisdom should be relieved of their duties. As an experimental measure the scheme received the sanction of the Supreme Government.

INCREASE IN MISSIONARY SCHOOLS:

The Mutiny of 1857, brought about a radical change in the policy of Government towards Missionaries. They were considered responsible to a great extent for the unfortunate happenings. On the transfer of power to the Crown, the Government of India reverted to the earlier

32. A.S., Letters issued to the Government; Vol. No.19(a), January to September 1855; Jenkins to the Secretary, Government of Bengal, 25 May, 1855, No.32.

33. Ibid.

34. A.S., Letters issued to the Government; Vol.No.22, July 1857 to December 1858; Jenkins to the Secretary, Government of Bengal, 21 May, 1858, No. 63.
policy of perfect neutrality in the matters of education. It decided that the educational establishments under Missionary societies should hereafter impart secular education and the system was to be based on entire abstinence from interference with the religious instruction. Further schools in the hands of the Missionaries were henceforth subjected to the inspection of the Divisional Inspector or any other educational officer of Government. Moreover, the Holy Scripture was excluded from the course of teaching; but the pupils were at liberty to study the Bible and to obtain instruction from their teachers as to its facts and doctrines outside school hours.

The Government of Assam, however, thought that the teaching of the Bible or any other scripture was not objectionable and dangerous particularly in hill districts. The first step involving a departure from the general line of secular education was taken by W.S. Atkinson, the Director of Public Instruction, Bengal, when in 1860 he recommended grant-in-aid to Reverends Bronson and Scott for the spread of education among the masses of Nowgong and Sibsagar without requiring a strict compliance with the grant-in-aid rules. To the wild and rude tribal people of this province

35. C.D., 1859; 7 April, No. 4, Para. 34.
36. Ibid.; Para. 59.
37. C.D., 1864; 23 January, No. 2, Para.2.
the Director of public Instruction thought that a sudden change in the existing system would create troubles in the success of secular education for years to come and, therefore, he suggested to the Government of India to abandon the said provisions and to grant freedom to the authorities in Assam to work in their own way and according to the best of their judgment under varying circumstances. Atkinson wanted to adopt a system of imparting religious knowledge along with secular education; the fact was that the Garos as well as other tribes had a desire to know 'God's Books', which seemed to be a great motive power to affect a profound change in the outlook of the hill people.

The Government of India accepted these suggestions and, accordingly, liberal grants were made to different Missionary institutions. In 1860, the grant to Missionary schools in Khasi-Jayantia Hills was increased to Rs. 150/- per month. In 1864, impressed with loyalty of the Christian converts and the educated Khasis during Jayantia insurrection in 1862-63, the Government raised the grant to rupees five hundred a month. In 1875, the grant had to be reduced on account of the introduction of decentralisation scheme, and the creation of the new province of Assam which incurred

38. B.E.P., 1867; 24 May, No. 3, Robinson to Haughton.
39. Ibid.
heavy expenditure on the Government. Yet the numbers of schools rose to sixty-eight and pupils to 1,666 in Khasi-Jayantia Hills. In 1881-82, of one hundred boys schools, only one was high and four were middle English schools; of twenty-three girls' schools, only six imparted English education to girls.

In 1867, Atkinson, the Director of Public Instruction, urged the Government of India that it would be the most advisable plan to encourage the American Missionaries for the spread of education among the Garos and to provide them necessary grants. On his recommendation, the existing grant of rupees six hundred with a further increment of rupees twenty-four was sanctioned to American Mission for the maintenance of four village schools in the Garo Hills. Within a period of ten years, the number of Mission schools rose to twenty-two. The success of these institutions led the Deputy Commissioner to transfer all the Government schools to the Mission in 1878; and since then the Mission under Reverend Phillips obtained the whole of the Government grant of rupees three thousand on condition that they would

43. B.E.P., 1867; 24 May, No. 3, Bronson to Haughton.
44. B.E.P., 1867; 27 July, No. 20, Harrison, Junior Secretary, Government of Bengal to the Director of Public Instruction.
also provide rupees one thousand annually. Within three years the number of schools and scholars under the Mission rose to twenty-nine and 396 respectively. In North Cachar, four schools were opened by Government, in each station of Assaloo, Rivsa, Alungka and Langphar which had an aggregate of thirty-eight Mikir pupils. In Naga Hills, the first school was opened at Barpather in 1871 with a numerical strength of thirty-nine students. In 1876, another school was started at Kohima and attended by forty-three pupils. A grant of rupees forty-five was sanctioned in 1884 to Reverend Clarke of the American Baptist Mission to establish two schools in Merangkong and Molong villages. In all these schools, ordinarily, elementary instructions were given in English, besides in hill languages and Bengali or Assamese.

The Missionaries directed their attention to the backward areas of the plains as well. Thus twelve schools were started in Darrang for the Kacharis and one for the

48. B.E.P., 1859; 11 August, Nos. 5-6, Bayley to the Director of Public Instruction.
51. A.S., Home Education, B.Proceeding, November 1881, Nos.22-23; also Ward, S.R.; Glimpse of Assam, P.210
Miris. In these schools 277 boys received elementary instruction in Assamese under the superintendence of Reverend Hesselmeyer. The Progress of education in these areas was very slow, for until 1881 enrolment remained more or less the same. In 1855, apart from a Manipuri school at Lakhipur, three schools for the Kacharis and the Nagas were started in the district of Cachar. In 1874, at Nowgong Baptist Missionaries kept up five primary and four other schools entirely from their own funds. In 1881, the number rose to twenty-one; of these, thirteen were established in the Chapari Mahals, a backward area of the district of Nowgong. In Goalpara, a grant was sanctioned in favour of the Sonthal colony where two schools, one for girls and another for boys were established with eleven students. In eight tribal pathsalas in the district of Lakhipur, instructions were imparted to the pupils of the Miris, the Doaneahs, the Nagas, the Daflas and the Singphos. In the backward areas, pupils

52. A.S., Letters received from the District Officers; Vol. No. Nil, Deputy Commissioner of Darrang to the Chief Commissioner of Assam, 11 May, 1864, No. 193.
55. B.E.P., 1865; 14 June, No. 17, Bayley to the Director of Public Instruction.
56. R.P.I.A., 1874–75; P.20
58. Ibid.; P.16.
attended the schools entirely for the love or novelty of learning itself. They had little hope of getting any position in the Mission or any advantage, pecuniary or otherwise. Not unoften, pupils got tired soon after admission and left schools. No wonder, therefore, the progress was hopelessly slow. They considered it to be the highest aim of education if one or two young men in a village receive instruction in reading, writing and arithmetic or be able to transact the simplest form of business in the village.

EDUCATION COMMISSION, 1882; ITS RECOMMENDATION:

The Education Commission laid much stress on the spread of education amongst the backward communities who were sadly neglected in the past. The Commission pointed out that the backward classes who were unable to help themselves should always receive from the state proper attention to their claims of education. The recommendations could not but influence the State Government of Assam to give special consideration to the education of the backward areas. As a result, during the first ten years, eleven departmental elementary schools with 240 pupils were opened in interior parts of the Garo and Naga Hills. In 1891-92, the number of aided schools and scholars rose to forty-one with 686 in

Garo Hills, nine with 167 in Naga Hills, and 141 with 2,881 in Khasi-Jayantia Hills respectively. In these schools, Missions endeavoured to diffuse primary instruction through the vernacular of different areas. In Lushai Hills, progress was so rapid that in 1901 no less than twenty-five per mile of the male population knew how to read and write. The number of schools and scholars increased to such an extent that in 1899-1900, there were nineteen departmental schools with 338 scholars, 339 aided schools with 6,011 and four unaided with one hundred and thirteen scholars in the districts of Khasi-Jayantia, Naga and Garo Hills.

SCHOOLS FOR TEA GARDEN LABOURERS:

In 1905, the question of educating the children of labourers employed in tea gardens attracted the attention of both the Imperial and Local Governments. The first school of this kind was opened at Sibsagar in 1870 by Kashi Kanta Mukerjee, Joint Inspector of Schools, Sibsagar. Since then for thirty years no attempt whatever was made by the Government or by the public for the education of the children of tea garden labourers. Nevertheless, in 1905, to enquire into the condition of education in the tea gardens,


64. R.P.I.A., 1899-1900; Vide statistical table in Appendices.

65. B.E.P.,1870; 11 August, Nos. 4-7, Report of the District Officers to the Commissioner of Assam.
the Government of Assam appointed W.M. Kennedy as a special officer and the latter submitted his report in November 1906. At the time of enquiry the number of children of school-going age in the tea gardens was estimated at seventy-six thousand of which only 4,288 had received a rudimentary education and 1,926 were attending schools. Kennedy held the view that labourers' children attended a school out of curiosity when first opened, but attendance gradually dwindled; for it interfered with the wage earning capacity of the children who had to spend the whole of day in the school. Moreover, education did not appeal to the majority of European planters who knew little of vernacular education and who were interested only in profits in their undertakings. Nevertheless, through earnest endeavours of a number of mohurrers or more frequently of a few educated labourers instructions were imparted out of working hours to those who were anxious for it. Kennedy, therefore, felt that the successful propagation of education in tea gardens obviously depended on the fulfilment of certain primary requirements. Firstly, the system of education to be adopted should have favourable support and approval of the tea garden managers without whose active co-operation the Government would not


be able to give effect to any system of education. Secondly, the Government would first take the initiative to exercise the power of acquiring a site for school in each tea estate. Thirdly, financial help should be extended to them by the Government and the planting community. In consideration of these facts, Kennedy proposed for the consideration of the planting community the following three types of schools which seemed likely to meet the requirements of different localities:

That, (1) a private school should be opened for two hours in the day or evening under the complete control of the manager who would appoint and dismiss the teachers and receive aid from the Government, calculated on the result of an annual examination held by an officer of the Education Department; (2) an ordinary lower primary school should be organised, managed and maintained by the Government with the co-operation of the manager of the tea garden especially in connection with its proper functioning; (3) the decision as to the kind of school to be established and the language to be taught should be left with the owners and managers of the various tea gardens.

Accordingly, in between 1907 and 1909 fifty-two Government primary schools were opened, and the numbers of schools stood at one hundred and ten in 1919 with total

enrolment of 2,357 pupils. But no statistics of the schools under the control of the managers were available during the period under review.

EDUCATION OF OTHER BACKWARD COMMUNITIES:

The other backward communities did not attract the attention of the Government till the beginning of the present century. In 1907, the Government of Assam sanctioned as a tentative measure an annual subsidy of Rs.286/- to the American Mission at Goalpara to enable them to open four lower primary schools among the Rangdoniyas and Rabhas inhabiting the district of Goalpara and the outskirts of the Garo Hills, subject to condition that, (i) teachers should be paid at the rate of rupees eight per month; (ii) that the capitation system should be introduced; (iii) that the language to be taught should be Bengali and (iv) that the schools should be subject to inspection and control to be exercised by the Inspecting Officers of the Education Department over aided schools. The gradual decrease in the number of the Garo boys and the influx of the Rabhas, the Hajongs, the koches and the kacharis led to the conversion of a few Garo schools of Goalpara into mixed schools. No separate school was established for the Mech pupils who were also attending all grades of schools in the Dhubri subdivision. As there was a growing demand for

education of this community, in 1914, provisions were made for the establishment of thirty-six primary schools on condition that the local people should provide suitable accommodation for each school.

SECONDARY EDUCATION IN TRIBAL AREAS:

The increase in the number of primary schools and scholars, naturally, made a growing demand for secondary schools in the tribal areas. When in 1871-72, the number of primary schools and scholars in Khasi-Jayantia Hills rose to 53 and 921 respectively, schools at Shillong, Sella, Jowai and Cherrapoonji were raised to middle/schools. In 1878, when the number of pupils in these four middle schools rose to 445, a Government zilla school was started at Shillong. But in other hill districts, no secondary school was established till the end of the last century, mainly because in these hills progress of upper primary education was very slow: even in 1903-04, the number of schools in Garo Hills was three with 113 pupils, and only one in Lushai Hills with sixteen pupils. In Naga Hills, one middle English school was established in 1900, with seventy-nine pupils. Under the Resolution of

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71. A.S.,E.(Edu), A.Proceeding; January to June 1914; No.12, January 1914.
73. R.P.I.A., 1878-79; P.11.
1913, that no new middle English school should be opened differing in standard essentially from those recognised in high schools; on special considerations, the Government of Assam sanctioned in course of four years one aided high school and two middle English for the Garos, three middle English for the Lushais and one for the Nagas. Besides, fourteen vernacular schools were established in these hill districts with a view to diffusing vernacular education in their own language. To give further impetus to the education of these backward communities, concessions were allowed in favour of children of the hill tribes and aboriginal races appearing in the Matriculation Examination of the Calcutta University. The Khasi, Garo and Naga languages were recognised for the examination in vernacular composition, and the pupils were no longer required to take the alternative paper in English. In lieu of a classical language candidates of these hill tribes and aboriginal races were also allowed to offer composition in a vernacular language or an alternative paper in English.

In spite of these measures, the progress in secondary education amongst the hill tribes and backward communities was very slow. To carry out a satisfactory system of secular education through the Missionaries with their evangelical

76. R.P.I.A., 1913-14, P.12; also Report on the Progress of Education in Assam, 1913-17, Pp. 54-55.

spirit was an almost unattainable ideal. The Mission authorities in the past had concentrated their attention on equipping their converts with books written on the basis of Christian ideology. Naturally, there was a dearth of suitable secular text books which straggled all hopes of progress. The adoption of the tribal languages as the medium of instruction in primary schools led the secondary education in a blind alley. In absence of literature, a tribal pupil had practically no chance to reach a good standard of education. Attempts had been made to get over these difficulties by the publication of books; but this met with very little success. Most of the hill tribes had no language worth the name; some of the script were no doubt standardised by the Missionaries in recent years, but time was needed for these publication. Besides, the hillmen dwelling aloof from one another in linguistic isolation could derive no benefit from other languages than their own. As for example, in the Naga Hills, the four Naga clans the Angamis, the Aos, the Semas and the Lhotas—each had its own dialect. To teach these people in their own dialect was to restrict them to the opportunities of enlightenment. Nor the pupils could enter in the middle English schools where medium of instruction was English. There was also the difficulties of getting


adequately qualified teachers with a very meagre remuneration in the hills where state of communication was anything but satisfactory. Above all, the Semi-nomadic state of a considerable number of hill people who had shifting residences in their quasi-permanent villages and the changing jhum fields not unoften dissuaded the Government to sanction necessary grants which stood in the way of progress of secondary education in the hill areas of Assam.

* The hill tribes generally cultivate on the jhum system i.e. they burn down part of the forest, the ashes of which make a valuable manure, and then dribble in various kinds of seeds all mixed together. After one or two years, the villagers move on to a new clearance, and the deserted fields remain unfit for cultivation until the growth of fresh forests.