CHAPTER I

THE NEW SYSTEM: IN THE BEGINNING
At the treaty of Yandabo, 24 February, 1826, His Majesty, the King of Ava, surrendered, amongst others, his sovereignty over Assam, Cachar and Manipur to the East-India Company. In spite of this, the authorities at the Fort William were haunted by the fear of another war with Ava. The insecurity of the North-East Frontier demanded continued operation against the Singphos and the Khamtis who had been carrying on depredations in Upper Assam as collaborators of the Burmese invaders. David Scott, the Agent to the Governor - General, North-East Frontier, therefore, realised the utmost importance of conciliating, at any rate neutralizing, the opposition of the official aristocracy of the former Government. This could be done, he felt, by adopting administrative measures as far as practicable to the actual wants, prejudices and conditions of the people and specially by continuing to employ the leading men of the country in the discharge of duties of the hereditary offices subject to the supervision of the European authorities.

The educational institutions which survived the Burmese ravages, continued to be controlled by the priestly

1. Barpujari, H.K.; Assam : In the days of the Company, P. 23.
classes who had also exercised considerable influence over
the masses. Scott realised that the introduction of any
scheme for secular education affecting their monopoly would
be productive of great dissatisfaction and resentment
which might be prejudicial to the interests of the British
Government. He, therefore, left the indigenous system
undisturbed and continued to make grant of lands to the
institutions like the former Government. In early 1826,
with the approval of the Government of Bengal, he made
additional grants for the establishment of several indige-

ous schools in Upper and Lower Assam. Accordingly, in
September 1826, eleven schools were established in Lower
and Upper Assam. Of these, two were at Nine-ducars and one-
in each station of Gauhati, Nilachal, Patte Darrang, Hajo,
Bijali, Silah, Bishwanath, Nowgong and Desh-Darrang. Within
a few months, the number of schools rose to sixteen by the
addition of schools at Gauhati, Behajnee, Dharamapore,
Pattee Darrang and Boreegoge. In 1831, Adam White, the
Collector of Gauhati, rewarded several students of these
institutions by placing them in Government service. In the
same year, in collaboration with James Rae, a member of

2. A.S., Letters issued to the Government; Vol.No.1,
1834-1835; Jenkins to Deputy Secretary, Government of
Bengal, 21 June, 1834; also B.P.P., 1834; 10 July, No.11,
White to Jenkins, 18 June.

3. G.C.P.I.B., Gauhati School; Matthie to Jenkins, 13 February
1838; also B.P.P., 1826; 25 October, Nos 21-22.

4. G.C.P.I.B., Gauhati School; Matthie to Jenkins, 13 Feb-
uary, 1838.
Serampur Missionary Society, White started an Elementary English school at Gauhati. Instructions in this institution, particularly, in Elementary English work in science, was much appreciated as this was the need of the hour; the traditional learning, according to the official view, had nothing to do with the training in the art of new administration.

Scott's policy of conciliating the ex-official aristocracy soon proved a dismal failure. Under the former Government, these officials were not required to read or write for their respective calling. They were simply amazed at the sight of the new administration requiring written documents and intricate transaction in accounts. Hence they proved themselves not only incompetent but 'mere sources of headache' to the European functionaries. Consequently, they had to make room for 'men of business of inferior ranks' recruited mostly from the neighbouring districts of Bengal. Within a short time, the new recruits, commonly known as the amlahe, formed the connecting link between the Government and the governed. Outsiders, as they were, the amlahe had no permanent interests in the soil.

6. B.P.P., 1833; 30 May, No.89, Bogle to Robertson.
They felt tempted to exploit the situation as best they could. Inevitably, there followed in the early years of British administration in Assam a period of administrative confusion under which, in the word of a contemporary, "extortion and oppression rendered a large part of the country waste". On the other hand, the virtual monopoly of office by the outsiders caused ill-feeling and resentment amongst those who had a vested interests in the Government. Their feelings were, to a great extent, shared by their followers and sympathisers who not unnaturally felt that their salvation lay only in the restoration of the former regime.

ROBERTSON’S SCHEME:

The gravity of the situation was realised by T.C. Robertson, who succeeded Scott as Agent to the Governor-General, in April 1832. He felt that the position of the Government would be jeopardised unless immediate steps were taken to educate the local people with a view to absorbing them in Government services. He drew up an elaborate plan under which a number of institutions were to be started with the aid of the Moravians who were expected to be readily

7. B.P.P., 1833; 30 May, No. 83, Matthie to Robertson.

* Missions of the United Brethren, commonly called Moravians were the inhabitants of Moravia, now a part of Czechoslovakia. The Moravians as a Protestant Sect holding Hussite-doctrines were established among the Negroes, Hottentots, Americans, Indians, GreenLanders.
available. He thought that the best way to establish an institution on Moravian plan would be to obtain from Government a grant of land either in Kamrup or Darrang where the climate was better than elsewhere. The main object of the institution was to disseminate the Moravian method of teaching amongst the people particularly those ordinary crafts, such as, carpentry and smithery that were then not known to the local people. In the general department of this institution useful knowledge on a Christian basis might be imparted to a limited number of pupils who, in process of time, might become instrumental towards the advancement of the great masses of people and would profitably be absorbed in Government services. However laudable the scheme might be, it did not receive the approval of the Supreme Government. It was considered "too revolutionary and premature". The estimated annual cost of Rs. 3,400/- was also regarded as too heavy for the Government to bear. Above all, an invitation to the Moravians, who were Christian Missionaries,

and Tartars. The London Association aided them with fund. The only motive of the Brethren in sending Missionaries to distant Nations was to promote the salvation of their fellow men, by making known to them Gospel of Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ along with other useful education. Vide Latrobe, G.I.; "Particulars respecting the Missions of the united Brethren"; A concise account of the present state of the Missions of the united Brethren, No. 5

8. G.C.P.I. Gauhati School; Robertson to Southerland, 9 October, 1835.

9. G.C.P.I. Gauhati School; Robertson to Southerland, 9 October, 1835.
meant the encouragement of mission-activities for the spread of Christian principle which would be in direct contravention to the principle of religious neutrality then followed by the East India Company.

BEGINNINGS OF ENGLISH EDUCATION:

However, the scheme of imparting useful education to the Assamese youths received serious consideration of Captain Francis Jenkins who succeeded Robertson, in early 1834, as the Agent to the Governor-General, North-East Frontier and Commissioner of Assam. Within a few months of his assumption of office, being alarmed at the sight of outsiders in every field, particularly in Government offices, Jenkins wrote to the Government of India:

"These few (Assamese) in their present uneducated state do not suffice to carry on duties of our courts.............the old families of Assam are still losing influence in their own native province being elbowed out from those situations which lead to power and decent maintenance. This state of things appear to me pregnant with evil (consequences) and I know no other method by which it would be remedied than by the Government taking some active measure to provide instruction for the Assamese youths."

Inspired thus by a political cum administrative objective to win over the confidence of the official

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10. G.C.P.I.B.Gauhati School; Robertson to Southerland, 9 October, 1835

11. A.S., Letters issued to the Government; Vol.No.1. 1834-1835; Jenkins to Deputy Secretary, Government of Bengal, 1834, 21 June; also B.P.P., 1834; 10 July, No. 211, Jenkins to Deputy Secretary, 21 June; also Barpujari, H.K.; Assam : In the days of the Company, pp.275-276.
aristocracy of the former Government, the Commissioner
drew up a scheme of education. It envisaged the educating
of a few Assamese boys in Calcutta; for, he felt, the acqui-
sitions they would bring back with them would attract the
upper classes of society who would gradually perceive the
necessity of the attainment of English education. If they
were given this opportunity, they were sure to avail them-
selves of it; for they would not like to allow themselves
to be surpassed by the outsiders of inferior ranks. If
the desire for knowledge was in this way well kindled, he
felt that the progress of education would be ensured.

Jenkins pointed out to the Government of Bengal
that in a backward state like Assam instruction should be
the concern of the Government alone; because most of the
people were not in a position to take the responsibility
of education as they were universally poor and incapable
of judging themselves. He proposed to start a few schools
to impart English education in each station of Goalpara,
Gauhati, Darrang, Nowgong and Bishwanath and to place
them under the superintendence of the European residents.
The houses of the said schools, he suggested, should be
constructed with the assistance of the convicts of the

12. A.S., Letters issued to the Government; Vol. No. 1,
1834-1835; Jenkins to Deputy Secretary, Government
of Bengal, 21 June, 1834.
local jail. In the initial stage, teachers capable of giving instructions in Bengali and English would have to be procured from the neighbouring districts of Bengal; and later local teachers would certainly be available from those pupils who would come out successful in future 13 from those institutions.

It may be pointed out, in this connection, that for the promotion of education in a resolution of the Governor - General in Council on 17 July, 1823, a General Committee of Public Instruction was constituted for the Presidency of Bengal. Before long, a controversy arose amongst the members of the Committee as to the nature, medium and agency for the spread of education. Some favoured the continuance of the classical languages, while others advocated the promotion of useful knowledge through the medium of English. As regards the agency, the former believed in what is known as the 'Downward Filtration Theory', under which education was to spread from the upper to lower stratum in society; but the latter had little faith in such a theory in a backward country like India and recommended that the state should take direct


responsibility of educating the people. Since both the groups were equal in strength, the controversy dragged on for three years. Ultimately, on 7 March, 1835, Lord William Bentinck, the Governor-General of India, resolved upon the promotion of European literature and science amongst the people through the medium of English language.

No wonder, therefore, Commissioner's proposal for the establishment of English schools readily received the approval of the General Committee of Public Instruction. In June 1835, the Committee recommended the establishment of an English school at Gauhati; and in July, it appointed Mr. Singer as its Head Master on a salary of 16 rupees one hundred and fifty per month. In the beginning, there were fifty-eight students of whom forty-one were regular in attendance. Within three months, nineteen regular students left the school being obliged to work for their subsistence. Besides, the unintelligibility of the English language was the most important cause of deterring them from attending the school. As a remedy, in early 1836, three departments, namely Bengali, Sanskrit, and

17. G.C.P.I.B.Gauhati School; Singer to Jenkins and Bogle, 21 January, 1836.
Persian were added to this school. The result was encouraging; for in December 1835, scholars increased to 113; of whom seventy-seven were Hindus, thirty-three Muhammadans and three Christians. In 1836, it rose to 191, of whom eighty-eight attended the English, one hundred and four the Bengali and five the Sanskrit Department. In 1839-40, the school attained a permanent footing with the increase in enrolment to the tune of 366. In early 1838, William Robinson of the Serampur Mission was appointed the Head Master of the Gauhati school in place of Mr. Singer on a salary of Rs. 263/- per month. Being satisfied with the progress in English education in Assam, the Commissioner felt that it would not only enable the Government to fill up the vacancies in the Government offices with the people of the soil but also provide the means of spreading education amongst the masses.

18. G.C.P.I.B., Gauhati School; Singer to Jenkins and Bogle, 21 January, and February, 1836; also R.P.I.B., 1835-1836, P 221.
20. G.C.P.I.B., Gauhati School; Secretary, General Committee to Secretary, Local Committee, 22 April, 1838.
22. G.C.P.I.B., Comilla and Gauhati Schools; Secretary, Government of Bengal to Jenkins, 9 February, 1841.
VERNACULAR SCHOOLS:

In the meantime, Lieutenant Bogle, the Collector of Kamrup, emphasized the importance of vernacular education in Assam. In 1837, he pointed out to the Government of Bengal that English education would help only a few intelligent learners whereas to the great majority it would be a mere waste of time to acquire even the rudimentary knowledge of it. Therefore, he urged on the introduction of vernacular education by which all kinds of useful information would be easily attained by the people at large. After the acquisition of vernacular education, he added, there would be also a desire for English education that would act as the proper channel of all higher branches of knowledge. Being influenced by these arguments and considering the future possibilities of material gain to be derived from having a class of persons qualified for the minor posts of revenue officers, the Supreme Government sanctioned in 1837, an amount of rupees sixty-four for the establishment of vernacular schools in Darrang, Chatgaree and Tezpur.

But it was to the lasting credit of James Matthie, who succeeded Bogle as the collector of Kamrup

23. G.C.P.I.J.Gauhati School; Bogle to the Commissioner, 17 January, 1837.

in 1838, to spread mass education in the rural areas.

It may be pointed out, in this connection, that with the
* revenue reform in 1832-33, Pattas or title deeds were
introduced for the first time in the district of Kamrup,
where the ignorant villagers were frequently served with
notices from the court. To understand these and to pro-
tect themselves from being deceived by the amlahs, the
villagers felt the need of having rudimentary knowledge of
the Three R's through vernacular schools. On the represen-
tation made by a number of village headmen, Matthie drew up
a plan for mass education. His plan envisaged, firstly,
the opening of a branch Anglo-Vernacular School at Dharam-
pore, the most central and convenient place situated on
the north bank of the river Brahmaputra and secondly,
several vernacular schools in the mofussil areas. In the
former, pupils would be instructed at first to acquire
perfect knowledge of the vernacular language and then to
learn the rudiments of English, which would qualify them

* Pattas or title deeds were issued specifying therein
the amount to be paid by each ryot under the signature
and seal of the Collector. Revenue officers were pro-
hibited on pain of a heavy fine and dismissal from
realising more than was noted against a ryot's name.
Proclamations were also issued that payee should obtain
a receipt for every payment he made to Government.
Vide Barpujari, H.K.; Assam : In the days of the
Company, Pp. 64-65.

25. G.C.P.I.Gauhati School; Matthie to Jenkins, 13 Feb-
uary, 1838.
for admission to the Gauhati School where they would complete their higher education. In his letter of 13 February, 1838, to the Commissioner of Assam, Matthie proposed the immediate establishment of this school particularly for the benefit of the children of the areas remote from the Sadar Station. At the same time he wanted to establish twenty-one Mofussil (village) Vernacular Schools for the instruction of the masses through the medium of both Assamese and Bengali in the principal parganas of Kamrup at a cost of rupees seventy-nine per month. In these village schools, Matthie proposed that a little beyond the rudiments of reading, writing and arithmetic would be taught to the young pupils.

Matthie's plan received cordial support of the educationists like Thomas Munro, Mountstuart Elphinstone and William Adam. They thought that this would be a strong foundation upon which a huge fabric of higher education might be erected. Inspite of their advocacy, the General Committee of Public Instruction turned down the proposal since it was at variance with the declared policy of the


27. G.C.P.I. Gauhati School; Jenkins to Southerland, 26 February, 1838.

28. G.C.P.I. Gauhati School; Matthie to Jenkins, 13 February, 1838.

Government under which education should spread from the higher to the lower stratum in society. The Committee anticipated that the establishment of a well regulated institution at Guwahati would gradually produce a class of people acquainted with English literature and science through whose agency, later, the benefits of similar instruction might be diffused among the inhabitants of the land. Fortunately, on the strong recommendation of Mr. Ross, the then President in Council, Matthie's plan for village schools received the approval of the Government as an 'experimental measure' on condition that its continuance in future would be determined on the results of school examinations. The scheme relating to the establishment of Anglo-Vernacular school was, however, dropped on the ground that the efforts of the Government should only be directed towards the improvement of the Guwahati School rather than the establishment of many schools of inferior grades. Accordingly, in August 1838, the Commissioner established twenty-one village schools in the district of Kamrup. Within a year the number rose to twenty-two with

30. G.C.P.I. Gauhati School; Secretary, General Committee to Jenkins, 14 April, 1838, No. 389.

31. Ibid.

32. B.R.P., 1838; 14 July, No. 66.
an enrolment of 795 in regular attendance. The growing demand for such institutions compelled the Government to sanction two more schools in Luckimpore, three in Darrang and four in Nowgong. Within five years, the number of schools in active operation increased to twelve in Nowgong, with 458 pupils; in Darrang five with 121; in Kamrup twenty-two with 1,102 scholars, exclusive of the Gauhati school and its subordinate branches. In Luckimpore, the number of schools remained the same, but that of the pupils rose to 163.

BRANCH SCHOOLS:

When the portals of the public services were thrown open to the English-educated people, the demand for English education was also on the increase. Towards the close of 1839, two Bengali medium branch schools were set up, one at Nilachal another at Pandu near Gauhati, entirely at public cost with an enrolment of 125 scholars. Even these could hardly meet the growing demand of the people, particularly of the remote Parganas where guardians disliked to send their wards away from home on account of

33. A.S., File No. 397; Matthie to Jenkins, 11 June, 1839, No. 15.
34. B.E.P., 1843; 4 December, Nos. 4-6, Jenkins to Secretary, Government of Bengal.
35. R.P.I.B., 1843-44; P.132.
36. G.C.P.I.3. Comilla and Gauhati Schools; Secretary, Local Committee to Secretary, General Committee, 22 January, 1840

* Branch schools followed the curriculum of the Bengali Department of the Gauhati School.
their poverty and prejudices although they were equally eager for English education. To cater to their demand, additional branch schools were started in Beltala and Amingaon in 1840; and one in North Gauhati in 1841; the total number of the pupils of these five branch schools including Gauhati school rose to 523 in the year 1840-41. Sibsagar being too far from Gauhati, an Anglo-Vernacular school was started at that station in February, 1841, with D'Souza as its Head Master and Ramsagar as Assistant Head Master and Urbidhar Sarma as Pundit. In the first year, the enrolment was one hundred and seven, and the average daily attendance was eighty. The flourishing condition of the school encouraged Lieutenant Brodie, the Principal Assistant, Sibsagar, to urge the Government for the sanction of eight village schools and two branch schools at Jorhat and Jaypur.

37. G.C.P.I.B., Comilla and Gauhati Schools; Robinson to Secretary, Local Committee, 8 January, 1841.

38. G.C.P.I.B., Comilla and Gauhati Schools; Robinson to Secretary, Local Committee, 23 March, 1841; also E.P.F., 1842; 9 February, No. 22, Officiating Secretary, Local Committee to Secretary, General Committee; also Report on the Police in the Division of Cuttack, Assam, Arracan etc. 1842, P.133.


40. A.S., Letters issued to the Government; Vol. No.10, September 1840 to July 1841; Jenkins to Officiating Secretary, Government of Bengal, 27 October, 1840, No. 187.
RESOLUTION OF 1844, ITS EFFECTS:

The Resolution of 11 October, 1844 of Lord Hardinge, the Governor-General of India, laid down that even in the selection of persons to fill the lowest offices under the Government due consideration should be given to those who could read and write. Though the resolution did not indicate clearly whether men with English education were to be preferred for Government employment, the effect was in favour of the English-educated people in other parts of India. In Assam, the resolution had its effect more in the expansion of the vernacular than in that of English education. The local authorities thought that in the backward state of Assam, it would not be possible to improve English education and hence they resolved that vernacular schools should only be the instrument for the promotion of education in Assam. The immediate effect of the Hardinge's resolution was the creation of a post of Inspector of schools whose main duties were to recommend the establishment of additional schools, where required, to persuade the inhabitants to send their children to the schools and to carry out the views of Government.


42. B.E.P., 1843; 4 December, No.13, Secretary, Government of Bengal to Officiating Secretary, Government of India; also Robinson, W.; A Descriptive Account of Assam, Pp.277-78.
in diffusing throughout the state a sound and gradually-improving system of education in the indigenous language. William Robinson, the Head Master of the Gauhati School, was selected for the new post of Inspector in the Eastern Circle. On his transfer, Gauhati School was reduced to the position of a purely vernacular school with a section for teaching English as an optional language under the Assistant Head Master. Similarly, when the average attendance of Sibsagar English School dwindled to thirty in 1844, it was decided by the Government to close the English Department and the Head Master was transferred elsewhere. After the closure of the English departments, all branch schools were subsequently renamed as vernacular schools. On the other hand, in June, 1847, eight Government village schools were sanctioned in Goalpara, six in the district of Darrang, three in Luckimpore, two in Kamrup and two in Nowgong. Thus the total number of schools, including the vernacular and branch schools increased to seventy-one in 1846-47, as against fifty in 1843-44. In 1852, the number rose to seventy-four.

43. R.P.I.B., 1844-45; P. 11.
44. B.E.P., 1844; 29 April, No. 21, Secretary, Government of Bengal to the Commissioner of Assam.
45. B.E.P., 1847; 16 June, No. 13, Cecil Beadon to Jenkins.
46. B.E.P., 1847; 30 June, No. 30, Robinson to Jenkins.
with an enrolment of four thousand twenty-five pupils receiving instruction. Of these, twenty-six were in Kamrup, ten in Goalpara, five in Luckimpore, thirteen in Nowgong and nine in each of the districts of Sibsagar and Darrang.

SLOW PROGRESS IN EDUCATION; CAUSES ANALYSED:

Apparently, there was a steady increase in the number of schools and scholars. But the number was insignificant compared with the total population of the province. During the year 1853, the population of Assam Valley, including Goalpara, was more than twelve lakhs; of these only 4,268 received education, or in other words the percentage of educated people was 2.68%. Out of 35,416 boys of school going age only 4,268 were attending the school. Of this number again, 1,606 (37.6%) were learning letters and easy monosyllables; 1,395 (32.7%) were reading the simple stories in the Elementary Reading Book, and 1,267 (29.7%) were in advanced course of whom only 4% could apply that knowledge to different purposes. The main obstacles, which stood in the progress of education in Assam were not far to seek.


49. Ibid.; Vide Appendix - A.

50. B.E.P., 1853; 30 June, Nos.121-22, Robinson to Jenkins.
The province being an agricultural one, the common people had a general apathy towards education; their general idea was that there was no advantage to be derived from the establishment of schools and they could not spare their children from their agricultural labour which was more important to them than education. Not unoften they remarked: "We want the hands more than the heads of our children, in order to get food to fill our mouths". In short, they were content to live and die in ignorance as their forefathers had done.

Secondly, the general poverty of the people was also the stumbling block in the progress of education. It was expected that the Government should bear the expense of maintaining the Schools and the people on their part could do nothing more than sending their children to schools for instruction. There was a feeling far too prevalent amongst the people that the duty and responsibility of providing education to the rising generation belonged to the Government alone and that on their part the people had no exertions whatever to make. Consequently, the few Government Schools could do but little towards the promotion of mass education. Thirdly, upto the first half of the nineteenth century, only the populous and easily accessible parts of Assam were selected for

51. B.E.P., 1847; 30 June, No. 30, Robinson to Jenkins.
53. R.P.I.B., 1 October, 1851 to 30 September, 1852, P.171.
the establishment of schools and the outlying areas were not brought under consideration. Fourthly, the supineness and the indifference of the influential classes of Assam were, to a great extent, responsible for the slow progress of education; they took little or no interest at all in the institutions which they seldom visited, although they were expected to look after the general administration of these schools, and when required to build or repair a school house. Major Butler, Principal Assistant of Nowgong, suspected that the upper classes had the ulterior motive of keeping the rising generation down with a view to exercising their influence over them. Fifthly, the desire for instruction being based on no correct idea of its value was unstable and inconsistent. The motive, which brought the boys to the school was simply the prospect of getting Government employment. But when this ultimate object was not achieved, the interest flagged. The general complaint was that the Government had diverted the attention and energy of the people from their agricultural life to the hoax of Government services; and, as such, they accused the Government, "You have given us education under the promise of employment and unfitted us for an agricultural life".

55. Ibid.; also R.P.I.B.; 1 October, 1851 to 30 September, 1852, P 168.
MILLS' RECOMMENDATIONS:

To institute a closer and detailed enquiry about the local administration in Assam, in 1853, the Government of Bengal deputed Mr. A.J. Moffatt Mills, the Judge of the Sadar Dewani Adawlat of Calcutta. So far as the educational aspect of his enquiry was concerned, he was directed to ascertain (i) the actual influence of educational institutions on the mass of the population, (ii) the value they attached to such institutions, (iii) the probable motive which led them to send their children to schools, (iv) the number of pupils educated in them who had obtained Government employment, and (v) the benefits which had resulted there from. After having a thorough survey of the districts of Assam, Mills recorded his findings along with other aspects of administration in an exhaustive report commonly known as 'The Report on the Province of Assam' which he submitted to the Government towards the close of 1853.

According to Mills, since British occupation of Assam education extended largely in this Province and had done much good to the people. On the authority of Major Butler, Principal Assistant of Nowgong, he stated that in 1838 in the district of Nowgong universal ignorance pervaded the whole community without any exception, but in course of thirteen years, hundreds of boys had gone out from

the village schools with reasonable literacy. He noticed that the principal stimulus to education was an attraction towards Government service but till then only sixty pupils from Kamrup, eighty-five from Nowgong and sixteen from Sibsagar had secured minor jobs as Peshkar, Muhurrer, Gaon-Kakati, Nakal-Novis, and Clerk, in criminal and judicial departments. The people of Assam, Mills added, were debarred from the higher posts under the Government and could not take their proper share in the advancement of the province. This was due partly to their insufficient English education and partly to the keen competition with the candidates from the neighbouring state. Finally, Mills brought home to the Government of Bengal some of the existing evils, such as, the indifference of higher classes, the inefficiency of the school masters, lack of suitable vernacular textbooks and the use of Bengali as the medium of instruction. As a remedy, he recommended gradual substitution of the Assamese language for the Bengali, the publication of a series of popular works in the Assamese language, and the completion of the existing course of vernacular education in Assamese. Under this system of education, he thought, pupils would learn more in two years than in four years, as learning through the mother-tongue would minimise both time and labour of the pupils.

ANANDARAM DHEKIAL PHUKAN'S OBSERVATIONS:
Concurring fully with the views of Mills, Anandaram Dhekial Phukan, the Sub-Assistant of Nowgong and an eminent Assamese of the age, pointed out in his 'Observations on the administration of the province of Assam' that the aim of education should be "to make the people intelligent of good repute, steady in duty, faithful in trust, firm in character, obedient to the laws, useful to the country and serviceable to their kind".

Tracing the causes of the inertia and slow progress of English education in the society, Anandaram stated that (i) the Government took the policy of education in Assam as an experimental measure and rapidly implanted English education without considering its suitable methods of growth; (ii) they had suddenly abolished the instruction in English just on the plea of the general lack of intellect and zeal of the learners, and had hardly any patience to consider about the proper reorganisation of the whole system of education that would be appropriate for the people. Anandaram felt that the people were put under confusion as to the educational policy and, as such, their responses were meagre; and that the growth of English education suffered not because of the intellectual inferiority of the people but because of the defective methods of

instruction adopted by the Government. As a result, the entire educational growth faced a great retardation and hence no substantial benefits had been achieved.

For harmonious progress of education, Dhekial Phukan endorsed the views of Mills that the Government should take early and necessary steps for the substitution of Assamese for Bengali. He further suggested (a) the establishment of Normal Schools to train up a body of teachers and the enhancement of salaries of them, (b) publication of a series of translation in Assamese of popular works on different branches of knowledge written in European and regional languages and also (c) the creation of a separate department for the study of Sanskrit in the several vernacular schools. By introduction of Assamese as the medium of instruction Dekhial Phukan did not mean that Bengali should be altogether abolished; on the contrary, it should be cultivated as a language indispensable to complete the course of vernacular education and that standard Bengali works should be introduced in the higher classes. He finally suggested that Sanskrit should be taught throughout the province; for, he anticipated that the combination of a knowledge of Sanskrit with that of


vernacular in an institution would be readily accepted by the people of the respectable classes and the followers of the indigenous education as it would improve the intellectual capacities of the people and provide an impetus to survival of the system of education. If these measures were successfully carried out, he hoped, the mass of inertia of the society which was very difficult indeed to set in motion, would be easily encountered; and by such measures only the feeling of the people would be easily enlisted in favour of English education.

Although the need for defining a comprehensive educational policy embodying the measures suggested above had become imperative by the middle of the last century, the attitude of the Government of Bengal was then one of total indifference. No wonder, therefore, anomalies in the system of education continued to exist until recommendations made by the Education Despatch of 1854.

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