CHAPTER III

REORIENTATION AND DEVELOPMENT
The progress of education in Assam, nay in India as a whole following the Despatch of 1854 did not come up to the expectations of the Government. Some important recommendations of the despatch were not carried out while others were done in a mutilated form. Lord Ripon, the Viceroy of India, therefore, appointed on 3 February, 1882, the first Commission on education in India headed by William Hunter 'to inquire into the manner in which effect was given to the principles of the Despatch of 1854, and to suggest such measures as it might think desirable in order to carry out the policy already laid down.'

The second Afghan war, the threatening attitude of Russia and the third Burmese war had imposed a severe financial strain on the Government of India. The Commission, therefore, felt that if satisfactory progress was to be made in education, all available private agencies must be called for. The Commission held the view that the private enterprise had by this time been able to shoulder the responsibility of meeting the educational needs of the people. If the Government would withdraw the direct responsibility from the educational institutions and entrust them to private efforts, the overall progress of education in the country

would be surely wholesome. It was felt that local enterprises would come forward towards the expansion of education right from primary to the secondary level. As regards the policy to be adopted in future, the Commission recommended that it should be the aim of the Government to retire from the field of direct instructions and to help by reasonable subventions the independent institutions under the control of private agencies. For the promotion of mass education, it recommended the rapid growth of indigenous schools (nurtured by the local people only) which should be granted recognition on condition of their imparting secular education upto the standard prevailing in the lower grade of primary schools or Pathsalas.

INDIGENOUS SCHOOLS:

Accordingly, in 1884, the Government of Assam decided that special allowance should be granted to every one of those schools which would teach the lower primary course or atleast reading, writing and arithmetic in vernacular. Under the rules, the existing indigenous schools like tols and muktabs were not entitled to Government grant, since these institutions had no secular system of education on which the departmental standard could be grafted. To

recognise and reform these schools, C.A. Elliot, the Chief Commissioner of Assam, adopted the following measures:

(i) The policy of the Government would be to encourage the indigenous schools by extending financial aid after necessary inspection; (ii) the grant would be on the principle of payment by result system or on monthly basis when these schools would fulfil all the conditions laid down by the Government.

As a result of these measures, there was a gradual decrease in the number of these schools. In the year 1881-82, eighty-three tols imparted religious instructions to 1,757 pupils and 358 muktabs to 6,982 pupils. In 1881-82, only fifty-one schools of both the kinds imparted lower primary education to 919 pupils and in addition to these there were five Khamîti schools in the district of Lakhim-7 pur with seventy-five pupils. In 1900, the number increased to 262 schools with 5,492 pupils only. The number of institutions remained same till the year 1919.

BOARD SCHOOLS:

Under Lord Ripon's Resolution of 1882 on Local Self Government, Local Boards and Municipal Boards were

5. Memorandum by the Chief Commissioner of Assam on the recommendations of the Education Commission, 20 June, 1884.
7. Ibid.
established all over Assam, and under the recommendation of the Indian Education Commission, primary education became the main concern of the Board. They were made responsible within their circles for the administration of grant-in-aid to all kinds of schools, for the efficient management of the third grade Normal schools and for various matters related to education. At the end of the year 1883-84, the number of primary schools under the Board stood at 1,048 with 33,795 whereas in 1891-92, the number increased to 1,259 with 33,613 pupils. However, the number began to dwindle after 1891-92; and during 1897-1902, there was a rapid fall in the number of primary schools. In the initial stage, the Government had to deal with a population which resided in populous and easily accessible parts of the country and the latter realised the value of education. Before long, they had to face the people in the interior who were rather indifferent to education. When the standard for recognition was raised, the number further declined. But the main reason for the fall of primary education was that it continued to be neglected. The Government failed to give adequate financial aid to local bodies; while

11. R.P.I.A.; 1891-92, statistical table-V.
additional funds were spent on higher education, primary education was allowed to starve. For example, in 1901-02 the expenditure on primary education from provincial funds was Rs. 17,708/- as against Rs. 11,930/- in 1881-82, i.e., not even an increase of rupees three hundred per year. Of course, earthquake and famines swept over the country during this period and as such the energy and resources of the Government had to be diverted elsewhere leaving very little for education.

With the beginning of the present century, the financial condition of the Government of India considerably improved. The cessation of frontier wars and the absence of natural calamities had enabled the Government to allocate larger funds to the provinces for education. In the meantime, Lord Curzon (1899-1905), a statesman and a man of dynamic personality, became the Viceroy of India. He clearly saw the urgency of the spreading of education among the masses on an extensive scale for the improvement in agriculture and material condition of the rural areas. Therefore, he proclaimed in the Resolution of 11 March, 1904:

"The Government of India fully accept the proposition that the active extension of primary education is one of the most important duties of the state."

In pursuance of this resolution, the Government of Assam sanctioned a lakh of rupees for the encouragement of primary education and decided that new schools should be established in those remote localities where the people were deprived of sufficient facilities for education. As a result, in 1904-05, about seven hundred new lower primary schools were established for both boys and girls.

COMPULSORY PRIMARY EDUCATION:

Meanwhile, there was a growing demand not only for expansion of primary education but also for its compulsion. Gopal Krishna Gokhale, an eminent political leader of the age, held the view that the only way to ensure wide diffusion of elementary education among the masses was its compulsion. In 1910, he introduced a bill in Governor-General's Council for making better provision for the extension of elementary education. The object of the bill was to provide for gradual introduction of compulsory elementary education in every part of India. Gokhale's bill induced the Director of Public Instruction of the Province of Eastern Bengal and Assam to elicit opinions from officials and non-officials alike on the question of compulsory education.

15. A.S., E. (Edu.); A. Proceeding, July to December 1911, No. 9, September 1911.
16. Ibid.
The Reverend G.C. Evans, the Head Master, Shillong High School, wholeheartedly supported it. Miss. Garrett, the Inspectress of schools, Assam, though not opposed the bill in principle, pointed out many practical difficulties in its execution. Sharing the views of the other officials she opined that if education were made compulsory it should be free as in other countries; for it would be unfair and inequitable to make the people of Assam pay fees and educational cess. A storm of protest against compulsion came from those for whom the bill was intended. The rural people generally opposed any form of education which made their boys reluctant to follow the avocations of their parents. There was no demand for compulsion in Assam and, as such, no necessity for it. Persuasion was considered by the officials to be more effective than compulsion specially in the diffusion of elementary education. There was also the apprehension that compulsion might lead to disaffection in a class, hitherto, loyal; hence, any discontent among this class of people was to be studiously avoided before any decision could be arrived at on the subject. Similar objections were also raised in other parts of India and, as such, the bill did not receive the approval of the Supreme


18. Ibid.
Government. Though Gokhale's attempts thus failed, there is no denying the fact that owing to this agitation, under the Resolution of 1913, primary education received a great impetus in India. The resolution laid down that:

"Fresh upper primary schools will be established at suitable centres and the existing lower primary schools will be necessarily upgraded into upper primary schools, and expansion will be secured by means of Board's schools. Besides, the liberal subsidies must advantageously be given to tols, muktabs and pathsalas which are ready to undertake simple vernacular teaching of general knowledge."

Accordingly, at the annual conference of the educational officers held at Shillong in October, 1913, several recommendations were made on the subject of elementary education. Under these, firstly, arrangement should be made for a full elementary course up to the class III; secondly, to link the primary to the secondary stage, English should be adopted as an optional language in the vernacular primary schools wherever local people would be willing to make satisfactory arrangements for its management and cost; and thirdly, elementary education should be put under the particular care of the Local Boards and secondary education under the state.

During the year 1913-14, education was made free up to the middle vernacular course; and under the Act of 1915,


these schools along with all vernacular primary schools were brought under the direct control of the Local Boards.

Simultaneously the middle English schools managed or aided by the Board were taken over by the Department of Education in the cadre of the aided middle English schools, and the funds so released were diverted to the management of all kinds of vernacular schools. With the declaration of the Assam Local Self-Government Act of 1915, the subdivisions and not the districts were made the administrative units of the rural areas of the plains. Accordingly, the Local Boards were created in all subdivisions and each Local Board was charged with the establishment, maintenance and management of all primary and middle vernacular schools within its jurisdiction. In general, each Board exercised a measure of independence in appointing the staff, fixing the rates of pay, voting money, deciding location of schools etc. In the subsequent two years allotments to the educational establishments of the local bodies were increased, and as a result, thereof, the total number of boys' primary schools rose to 3,924 with 1,61,481 pupils and the total girls' schools to 347 with 10,794, and the number of middle

vernacular schools to 124 with 12,996 pupils. Thus, the application of the principles of the Local Self-Government Act began working more successfully in Assam where it seemed to have led all children of school-going age into schools within a few years.

EDUCATION OF THE WOMEN:

Prior to 1882, as already discussed, all educational efforts were concentrated mainly on male education, and as such it led to poor results in the case of intellectual and moral uplift of women. The Education Commission of 1882 was, of course, fully aware of the supreme importance of the education of women and hence recommended that female education should equally have its legitimate share of the local, municipal and provincial funds for its encouragement.

Endeavours were soon made on the lines of the Commission's recommendations. Within ten years, the number of schools rose to 138 with 1,808 girls as against forty-three with 592 girls in 1881-82, and at the end of the century, these figures increased to 202 with 3,159 on the rolls.

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29. R.P.I.A.; 1899-1900; P.49.
But all these schools were located in the urban areas. It was very difficult to induce the parents of the outlying villages to send their girls to schools, for they were supposed to be very useful in household duties. Inspite of this, the Commissioner of Assam took the bold step in encouraging female education in the villages by granting to the Gurus of the boys' pathsalas an additional amount of annas four monthly for each girl student to be brought to their schools. The system produced good results and within three years 2,114 girls were admitted into boys' schools. In the next twenty years the number rose to 4,269.

SECONDARY EDUCATION:

Till the year 1882, secondary education was exclusively a concern of the Government. The relation of the state to secondary education was different from its relation to primary education. Funds were provided for primary education even in the absence of local enterprise, but it was considered expedient to sanction aid for secondary education only where adequate local co-operation was available. The Education Commission found that despite rapid expansion during 1854 to 1882, the number of schools was not sufficient from the point of view of the total

30. A.S. Education Home, B. Proceeding; June 1855, (no date), Nos. 11-12.
population. This unsatisfactory progress led the Commission to think that the only way to achieve success was the gradual withdrawal of Government from direct enterprise leaving the expansion of secondary education to efficient private bodies on grant-in-aid basis. It was, however, considered necessary that Government should maintain at least one model high school in each district and establish new schools in backward areas where the people were unable to establish such schools for themselves. In Assam, these recommendations were fully carried out. Before long, the number of schools and scholars increased enormously. In course of twenty years the Government High Schools numbered ten with a numerical strength of 2,411 students; the Government Middle English Schools numbered three with 179 and the Government Vernacular Middle Schools numbered fourteen with 1,103 pupils. Apart from these, five new Aided High Schools with 935 pupils and five unaided schools with 937 pupils came into existence. The number of Aided Middle English Schools rose to fifty-six with 4,104 and that of unaided ones to twenty-three with 1,633 on the rolls; and Aided Middle Vernacular to twenty-four with 1,304 scholars.

34. Ibid.; P. 254.
36. Ibid.; P.8.
It will be seen from the above, that towards the close of the nineteenth century the expansion of education through private enterprises had greatly succeeded. But, the policy of Laissez Faire to private enterprise so long followed in Assam, as elsewhere in India, had brought in its train various evils. Most of the schools conducted by private agencies were inefficient, illequipped and poorly staffed. They were more in the nature of 'coaching institutions' than 'centres of learning'. The remedy was, therefore, sought by Lord Curzon in the abandonment of the "policy of Laissez Faire and expansion" and the application of "control and improvement". Quality and not the quantity became the keynote of the new policy. The Government of India's Resolution of 1904 clearly laid down:

"Whether these schools are managed by public authority or any private persons and whether they received order from public funds or not, the Government is bound in the interests of the community to see that the education provided in them is sound."

The immediate effect of the implementation of the resolution in Assam was the closure of a number of secondary schools. In 1904, there were twenty-seven high schools and one hundred and twenty middle English and middle vernacular schools with a total enrolment of 14,891:

but in 1911-12, the number of high schools remained the same and that of middle English and middle vernacular was reduced to ninety-five with an all total strengths of 19,623 scholars. Though the quantitative growth was thus arrested, very little was done to improve the quality of the secondary schools. The claim of secondary education was overlooked on account of higher priority given to collegiate and particularly free and compulsory primary education.

Lord Curzon's object was, however, fulfilled to a great extent by the Resolution of the Government of India in 1913. It laid down that the policy of Government of India as regards secondary education was to improve the few existing Government schools by (i) employing only graduates and trained teachers (ii) introducing graded service for teachers of English (iii) providing suitable school curriculum complete in itself. Another objective was to increase the grant-in-aid to the aided institutions so that they might keep pace with the improvement in Government schools on the lines indicated above. Further it aimed at multiplying the training institutions and Government schools in such localities as actually required them.

39. Report on the Progress of Education in Assam, 1913-17; P.34.
40. A.S., E.(Edu.), A. Proceeding; January to June 1913, No. 4, 22 March 1913.
Accordingly, the Government of Assam decided (1) to provincialize the majority of the aided high schools at subdivisional headquarters; (2) to open two sections in any class, where necessary, in all the old and new Government high schools, each of which would have at least six hundred and forty boys; (3) to encourage the establishment of middle schools where there was no high schools, and, thereby, relieve pressure upon the lower classes of the existing high schools; (4) to improve the existing aided high schools by increased grant-in-aid in order to enable them to secure and retain the services of a reasonably well-qualified staff; (5) to assist in the opening of new high schools where a demand for it would be clearly shown and the public would make the usual proportionate contributions.

In pursuance of the aforesaid measures several aided schools were provincialised in course of next five years. These were high school at Karimganj, Maulvibazar, Goalpara, Barpeta, Mongaldai and Bezbarua High School at Golaghat. In addition, the provincialisation of the Habiganj High School, which was on a temporary basis, was made permanent, and the Government Middle English School at North Lakhimpur was raised to the status of a full-fledged Government High School. All these schools along with

the existing high schools were admitted to the double-sectioned standard as demanded. The addition of these sections gave a total of one hundred and one sections in excess of the requirements of normal single-sectioned high school and it would have been equivalent to nearly thirteen high schools. Besides, Sonaram High School at Gauhati was taken up in the aided list along with the George Institution at Dibrugarh, the Narsing Institution at Silchar and the Panchakhandha Horagovinda High School in the Karimganj subdivision. The completion of the scheme of having a Government high school at each subdivision still awaited the provincialization of high schools at Sunamganj and Hailakandi; but proposals in this direction were put off on account of the paucity of funds. However, several Government middle English schools were opened at Tezpur, Barpeta, Habiganj and a few other places.

The condition of the middle schools was far from being satisfactory. In 1912-13, the Inspector of schools, Assam, observed that the middle English Schools were perhaps the least efficient of all classes of educational institutions. Since the teachers were not properly qualified and were appointed on a temporary basis, in most of these institutions

42. Report on the Progress of Education in Assam; 1913-1917, P.35.
the pupils were ill taught in English, vernacular and the core subjects in the curriculum. In the Educational Officers' Conference at Shillong, 1913, after prolonged discussion, it was recommended that (i) middle school education should become the direct responsibility of the Department; (ii) no new middle English school should be recognised unless it was well founded in every respect on the standards of the middle English section of the recognised high schools; (iii) existing middle English schools should continue to be recognised as such, but inferior ones should be reverted into Middle Vernacular Schools to be controlled by the Board; (iv) Middle English schools should ordinarily confine themselves to the English teaching classes, namely IV to VI, to which free vernacular instruction in primary level might be attached.

In the following five years the number of Middle English schools increased from ninety-five to one hundred and seventeen and the curriculum followed was that of the corresponding classes of high schools; but the quality of instruction imparted in these institutions showed no remarkable improvement.

44. Report on the Progress of Education in Assam 1913-1917; P. 43.
The most important development during the period under review was the growth of collegiate education. Since the abolition of the collegiate class at the Gauhati School in 1876, no other institution existed to impart instruction beyond the high school standard. The scholarships provided for students to prosecute higher studies in the colleges of Bengal were extremely inadequate. Consequently, majority of the students found themselves after passing the Entrance Examination in a blind alley. Memorials from the inhabitants of the province had been presented on several occasions to the Chief Commissioner praying for the reopening of the lower grade college at Gauhati. The failure of the previous experiment made S.C. Bayley (1878-1881), the Commissioner of Assam, cautious of the collegiate instruction. Nevertheless, he expressed in a Resolution of 27 December, 1888:

"Should the people evince, in this practical manner, the strength of their desire for higher education, the Chief Commissioner will be prepared to contribute from provincial fund a sum equal to that raised by private subscription."

For collegiate education, he thought, Government should encourage private enterprise by giving adequate grant-in-aid. Therefore, prospect of collegiate education in Assam depended solely on the successful endeavours and contributions made by private bodies. As a matter of facts, some provisions

were made in the budget estimate for 1880-81, to start a lower grade college at Gauhati if the people would come forward with necessary contributions. The response was not encouraging; therefore, in 1882, C.A. Elliott succeeded Bayley as the Commissioner of Assam (1881-85), instituted in lieu of a college several senior scholarships in addition to the existing junior ones to enable the students to prosecute higher studies in the colleges in Bengal. In 1883-84, there were forty-six junior and eleven senior scholarship holders in the colleges of Bengal preparing themselves for F.A. and B.A. examinations respectively. Private enterprise soon entered into the field; and in Surma Valley Raja Girish Chandra Ray, a Zamindar of Sylhet, who had keen interest in education, started a second grade college at his own town on June 27, 1892, and it was named Murarichand College after his father Murarichand Ray. Even during the opening year there were eighteen students, of which, ten were sent up for the F.A. examination and four of them came out successful. The institution, being purely a private one, had to meet all its expenditure from fees and the liberality of its founder. The college did not receive any aid nor recognition from the Government till the year 1912. It was maintained by the munificent Zamindar whose contribution to

49. R.P.I.A.; 1883-84, P.14
that institution was over three thousand a year.

The provision of scholarships instituted by Mr. Elliott for higher education silenced the people; in fact, a considerable section of them appeared to be more satisfied with the measure than the establishment of a second grade college at Gauhati. To their utter disappointment, in 1887, William Ward, who then officiated as the Chief Commissioner, restricted the number of scholarships to fourteen to be awarded in order of merit. Naturally, therefore, the agitation for the implementation of a college scheme which was temporarily dropped renewed. The preponderance of opinion was in favour of a first grade college teaching up to the B.A. standard; but an influential minority favoured a second grade college teaching up to F.A. standard. Another section, including William Booth, the then Director of Public Instruction, opposed its location at Gauhati as the place was neither healthy nor centrical; while a few others held the view that Assamese youths should go to Calcutta with a view to having a broader outlook. Consequent upon these conflicting aims and objectives the obvious demand of the people was

neglected for about a decade. In 1899-1900, it was found that the total number of students from the province reading in Arts Colleges in Bengal reached about three hundred; of whom forty-two passed the F.A. and sixteen the B.A. Examinations. This was brought to the notice of Government in the same year by Manik Chandra Barua, a highly public-spirited man of the age. After refuting the arguments of his opponents he effectively made out a case for the establishment of a college at Gauhati. In a strong note to the Government, he pointed out that.

"Assam is the only province which has not got a college. Indeed, it was not a high institution worth the name. A college at Gauhati with an European Principal will be better appreciated by the students."

Regarding the climate of Gauhati, he admitted that the general health at this station might be questioned on account of the ravages of Kahazar; but other places in Assam also could not escape from its serious grip. On the other hand, Gauhati was the most suitable location for the proposed college; for it was much easier to reach Gauhati, by road or waterways from different parts of Upper, Lower and Central Assam and that it would be cheaper for the people to

55. R.P.I.A., 1899-1900;

stay at Gauhati than in Calcutta. It is also nearer to Bengal and after the construction of the railway up to the north bank of the river Brahmaputra, it would be connected with Calcutta. Inspite of these advantages, if the Government considered that it was premature for starting a college, by higher education in Assam might be promoted/an extension of the system of scholarships and by the establishment of an Assamese hostel in Calcutta.

After a careful consideration of the whole question Sir H.S. Cotton, the then Chief Commissioner of Assam, felt that the time was not yet ripe for a college at Gauhati. He agreed to the alternative scheme suggested by Mr. Barua; but he was also disposed to consider the case for a college at Gauhati if the people in general were in its favour. Circular letters were accordingly issued inviting public opinion and the response was overwhelming. When a strong sentiment was expressed in favour of a college, without the least hesitation Cotton excepted the people's verdict. In July 1900, he decided to establish a second grade college at Gauhati instead of a first grade one on account of paucity of funds then caused by the great earthquake of 1897.


60. A.S., Education, Home, A. Proceeding; Nos.41-54: July 1900.
Accordingly, on 17 June, 1901, a Government college was started at Gauhati after the name of Sir Henry Cotton. It was affiliated to the Calcutta University up to the F.A. standard, and the courses comprised English, Second Language, Mathematics, Physics and Chemistry as compulsory subjects, History, Logic, Physiology and Sanitary Science being optional subjects. At the beginning, the teaching staff consisted of five members: One Principal and four Professors. It had on its rolls thirty-seven students in the first year. Later, the number in the first batch swelled to ninety-one, of whom forty-five belonged to the first year and forty-six to the second year.

The result of the F.A. examination in 1905 was the best as yet attained by the college. The percentage of pass was 57.2 as against 40 and 31.7 in 1901 and 1902 respectively. The success convinced Mr. J.B. Fuller, the Commissioner of Assam (1902-1905), that since the chances of the failure of the collegiate institution in Assam were no more, it should safely be raised to the status of a first

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grade college. The proposals were laid before the Government of India and from the commencement of session 1909-10, the Cotton College was raised to the status of a first grade one. It was then affiliated upto the B.A. and the 3.3c standard of the Calcutta University in the subjects, namely, English, Mathematics, Philosophy, History, Arabic, Persian, Sanskrit, Vernacular Composition, Physics and Chemistry. The college also received recognition to give instruction in the I.Sc. courses in English, Vernacular Composition, Mathematics, Physics and Chemistry.

In 1907, Raja Girish Chandra Roy, the founder of the Murarichand College, Sylhet, finding himself in financial difficulties sought the help of Government. In response the Government of Assam sanctioned a provisional grant of rupees five hundred per month from May 1908 and also forwarded a proposal to the Government of India for the provincialisation of the college. Next year, not only the grant was raised to rupees eight hundred a month but the staff was also strengthened with addition of several Professors and Lecturers selected by the Director of Public Instruction. The gradual rise in the number of students and the constant

64. Report of Public Instruction on Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1908-09, P.17.
66. Ibid.; P. 33
demand made by the public led to the provincialization of the Murarichand College in May, 1912, on a second grade basis. The range of affiliation was very narrow providing the teaching in English, Physics, Chemistry, Mathematics and Logic only. Since then the Supreme Government desired this college to specialise in science and develop gradually to the degree status in those subjects in the science course.

After the reconstruction of the Province in 1912 as a distinct unit Assam obtained a larger allocation of funds from the Government of India. Archdale Earle, the then Chief Commissioner of Assam, decided to meet the public demand for higher education by raising the standard of higher education of the two colleges of Assam to that of the first grade colleges in Bengal as far as possible. Accordingly, in 1912-13, the Government of Assam submitted to the Government of India a scheme for broadening the basis of affiliation and upgrading the courses of studies to the Honours standard. In case of the Cotton College, the proposal contemplated the immediate advance of the affiliation to the Honours standard in all the subjects of study except Persian, and to the M.A. standard in English. Honours

69. Report on the Progress of Education in Assam; 1913-17, P.29.
affiliation in the subjects of English, Mathematics, Chemistry, Physics, History, Sanskrit, Political Economy and Philosophy was granted within two years. The Syndicate of the Calcutta University was at first unwilling to grant post graduate affiliation considering that the Cotton College as a moffusil institution was setting its aim too high. But soon it took a sympathetic view to the proposal after realising the fact that it was a provincial or divisional institution, which should be developed to provide within reasonable limits for the requirements of Assam. So in 1914-15, the University permitted the Cotton College to open the post graduate class in English.

In the case of Murarichand College the progress was rather slow. Pending the elaboration of a more ambitious scheme, the Commissioner took great care for the improvement of the college as a full-fledged second grade institution. The first step in this direction was taken by the extension of affiliation in all subjects of I.A. and I.Sc standard of the Cotton College. The enrolments rose over two hundred in 1915 as against one hundred/twenty-eight in 1913. This rapid increase on the rolls led the Commissioner

A scheme was submitted to the Government of India proposing the affiliation should be granted up to the Degree Pass and Honours standard in all the subjects taught in the Intermediate standard. The Government of India agreed and in 1916-17, the college was raised to the status of a first grade college with the affiliation up to B.A. pass standard in English, Vernacular, Mathematics, History, Philosophy, Persian and Arabic. Owing to paucity of funds, Honours affiliation was not granted and it continued its functioning as a college up to the Degree course in pass subjects only.

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION: SLOW PROGRESS:

The literary elements in education, as discussed in the foregoing pages, continued to dominate the field of education in Assam; for the chief aim of the Government was to produce a number of officials and clerks for its various departments. With the exception of isolated efforts for industrial classes, no comprehensive scheme for professional education was taken up until the beginning of the twentieth century. As a matter of fact, hardly was there a demand for such education in Assam. The reasons were not

far to seek. The province was scarcely populated; and, as such, there was no competition nor struggle for existence demanding hard work. The people were quite satisfied with their usual way of earning a livelihood and were, therefore, loath to learn a trade involving a practical scientific training.

The Despatch of 1854 realised for the first time the necessity of an education of such a character as might be practically useful to the people of India in their different spheres of life. But nothing tangible was done by the Government of Assam in the subsequent years for the promotion of technical education. In 1867, George Williamson, a senior administrative officer at Golaghat, donated one lakh of rupees for the purpose of technical education in Assam and this fund came to be known as 'Williamson Assam Education Fund'. From the proceeds of this fund, classes in surveying and carpentry were decided to be opened in the middle vernacular schools at Golaghat and Jorhat. Till the year 1872, the scheme could not be executed since the buildings raised for those purposes remained incomplete. In 1873, classes were started; and the tuition fee of one rupee per

78. C.D., 1854; 19 July, No. 49, Para.42.
79. B.E.P., 1867; 11 April, No. 11.
80. B.E.P., 1872, 16 September, Nos. 48-52.
month per head for learning carpentry and handicraft was
sanctioned by the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal. As these
courses were not able to fulfil the objects with which
these were started, R.H. Keatinge, the Chief Commissioner of
Assam (1874-78), converted the school at Jorhat in 1875,
into a purely artisan school with a Superintendent expert
in boat-building and a carpenter and a blacksmith as assis-
tants. In the same year, there were two hundred and thirty-
four pupils in these two institutions. Since the demand for
boat building was extremely limited the survey classes at
Golaghat Middle Vernacular School were soon abolished, but
those at Jorhat school continued. No further step was taken
until 1887, when William Ward, the officiating Chief Commissio-
ner, issued a circular to the effect that scholarship
holders after Entrance Examination might, at their discre-
tion, go up for the Diploma or the Degree courses at the
Medical or the Civil Engineering College in Calcutta. In
1896, a scholarship scheme for the Sibpur Mechanical Appren-
tice class was also instituted for the students of Assam.

81. A.S., Pile No. 13-13; 1873, 13 June, (no number).
82. R.P.I.A., 1874-75; P. 29.
84. A.S., Education Home, A. Proceeding; Nos. 123-24, July
1899, (Note by Chief Commissioner).
85. A.S., E(Edu), Home, B. Proceeding; Nos. 975-978,
April 1896.
Gradually, the demand for technical instruction was on the increase. It was increasingly felt that the pressure on the learned and literate professions needed a change by diverting educated classes to lucrative appointments in commercial and manufacturing industries. In 1901, the question of technical education was taken up seriously by formulating a new scheme in the Simla Conference of the Directors of Public Instruction from all provinces. The conference observed:

"The most useful form of industrial school is a local trade or craft school, directed to the furtherance or development of a local industry which appears to be capable of expansion by the application of superior methods or implements".

In 1904, it was decided that the youths of Assam should be sent as apprentices to the railway workshops at Dibrugarh, Jorhat and Tezpur to be trained as useful carpenters and blacksmiths. The apprenticeships were intended for those youths of Assam who were familiar with the Three R's also had an aptitude for the crafts. This course would continue for three to four years with the provision of stipends varying from Rs. 6/- to Rs. 8/- per month on the condition of satisfactory progress. The main object of formulating this scheme was to turn out carpenters and blacksmiths to meet

the local demand. The number of apprenticeships allotted to each Railway Work-shop was six at Dibrugarh, four at Tezpur and five at Jorhat. In addition to these, three apprenticeships were tenable in the private workshops at Silchar, Gauhati, and Shillong. A land surveying school was also instituted in December 1913, near Gauhati, with the primary object of providing a training in survey methods for civil officers and junior revenue officials like those of Kanungoes and Mandals. Besides, some weaving industrial schools under the control of the Department of Industries were started, during the year 1918-19, with the object of improving the existing weaving industry in Assam.

The beginning of the twentieth century also saw the progress of vocational education. A second grade Medical school was established on June 7, 1900, at Dibrugarh by J.B. Fuller, the officiating Chief Commissioner of Assam. The object of the Medical education was to train students in the Medical Diploma course chiefly for service in the Hospitals and Dispensaries of the Government, Local and Municipal Boards. From June 14, the class commenced under the

Superintendence of the Civil Surgeon with thirty-eight students on the rolls and this rose to one hundred and forty-three at the end of the period under review. Since the abolition of the Law classes at Gauhati school in 1876, there was no provision for legal education in Assam till 1885, when the first Law College was established at Gauhati. But eventually it was closed in 1886 for want of a sufficient number of students. The enlightened public in Assam represented to Commissioner for the reestablishment of Law classes attached to the Government High Schools. The Government of Assam acceded their approval to the establishment of four classes at each station of Sylhet, Gauhati, Silchar and Sibsagar with the course of studies for pleadership Examination of the Calcutta University as adopted in 1869. But the progress of Law classes was not satisfactory. Therefore, with the exception of Law class at Gauhati, others were abolished and the former was developed in 1915 into a full-fledged Law College under the Calcutta University. With the establishment of this college, provision was also made for legal education, but results were not satisfactory.

94. A.S., E.(Edu), Home, B. Proceeding, Nos.788-89, April 1890.
during the entire period under review. Neither the students nor the teachers took their classes seriously for the obvious reason that it was the white collared jobs, not the legal professions that attracted most of the educated youths of Assam.

EFFECTS OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR:

To make matters worse, the First World War, (1914-18) and the economic distress in its wake adversely affected the progress of education in Assam. The cost of education mounted up with the increasing price of food-stuffs, clothing and other commodities. In 1911-12, the per capita cost of education was about rupees nine which rose to rupees eleven in 1916-17; and it further shot up to rupees twelve in 1918-19. It resulted directly in the withdrawal of a considerable number of scholars whose parents could no longer afford to keep them at schools. The average decrease in the number of students during the last three years of the period under review stood at 3,066. The effect of the war on educational finances was still more serious. The average sanction of the Government in each of the last three years was only Rs. 27,444/- as against Rs. 1,32,095/- in the preceding six years. This had inevitably demanded ruthless retrenchment bringing in, thereby, acute hardships to those who were in teaching profession. No wonder, therefore, the tempo of reform and expansion which had been in operation since the year 1882, remained practically stagnant during the period of the First World War.