

BIBLICAL INFLUENCE ON PRE-INDEPENDENCE KHASI LITERATURE

Philomena Kharakor RNDM

Principal

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Meghalaya



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About the Author

Sister Philomena Assilian Kharakor is a member of the Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions (RNDM) since 1968. The third child of Gregory Shrone Shabong and Kong Victoria Brian Kharakor, she came over with the rest of her family from the Presbyterian to the Catholic Church in 1953.

Sister Philomena had her schooling in St. Mary's School, Shillong, where she earned two double promotions in 1954 and 1961. She topped the list in the Senior Training Course in 1964. After her graduation from the University of Guwahati in 1973, she enrolled for the B.T. Course the following year in NEHU securing a First Class, and was awarded a national scholarship.

In 1982, sister registered herself in NEHU for the Master's Degree in Khasi Literature, and was a gold medalist in 1984. She then proceeded to M. Phil. and was awarded the doctoral degree in 1997.

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Sister has a number of publications to her credit :

- *Ka Kolshor Khasi Kumba Ka Paw Ha ka Litereshor Khasi* (1988) which was her M. Phil dissertation;
- She contributed to and edited the Death Centenary Souvenir of the Foundress of her Congregation : *Spark of Euphrasie* (1994);
- She has a number of articles in Khasi as well as in English in several periodical and papers;
- This present publication is book form of her doctoral thesis.

Sister Philomena was the co-founder of AINACS, Meghalaya Unit, in 1980 and its Secretary from 1980 to 1983, an associate editor of *Ka ling Khristan*, an Archdiocesan Catholic monthly in Khasi from 1992 to 1996; she is a member of the Khasi Authors Society (KAS), of the Catholic Authors' Guild (CAG), of the Catholic Board of Education of the Archdiocese of Shillong, and a familiar associate of the AIR, Shillong, where she is regularly called for her radio talks which are well appreciated. She is also a member of several local associations.

Sister Philomena has served in several education institutions; she was Headmistress of the Archdiocesan High Schools of Umsning, Pynursla and Marbisu. Presently she is the Principal of St. Mary's College, Shillong.

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To

Rev. Father Sylvanus Sngi Lyngdoh SDB

*The fearless pioneer in cultururation
the many faceted, versatile and elusive genius and Bible Scholar
who for 37 years lived and taught God's Word :*

*in profound admiration and sincere appreciation
of his unique and voluminous contribution
to Khasi and Biblical literature,*

this book is gratefully and humbly dedicated.

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The desire to go back to the roots has been of late a universal phenomenon among the Khasis. The history of the evolution and growth of Khasi literature has been like a big tree that stretches its branches in every direction. It is this conviction that has given impetus to Khasi scholars of various disciplines to dig up the concealed past of their ancestral literature. It is in pursuance of this cause, that the idea of going back to the parent source, the Bible, of pre-independence Khasi literature originated. I am indebted to late Dr. H.W. Sten for introducing me to this subject.

This work is the book form of my Ph.D. Thesis in Khasi Literature, NEHU, 1995.

The study of the Bible is, as it were, the soul of Christian literature. This study is not exhaustive; each age must in its own way turn and its own way seek to understand the sacred books.

This gigantic work of exploring the literature of the dim past of more than a hundred years would have been a wild goose chase if it was not for the guidance, patience and optimism of Dr. (Mrs) B. War. My sincere thanks to her. Of course, the subject is very close to her heart.

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Ph.D., a man of many parts and of mighty stature. He is no more, but his spirit and ideal continue to inspire students with enthusiasm and vision.

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Shillong,
1st January, 1998

Sr. Philomena Kharakór, RNDM

FOREWORD

In a meeting of a group of Khasi scholars in the Syngkhong Jingtip in 1961, in a well thought out and prepared speech, the great Khasi poet, Elias Hopewell Khariong, uttered these immortal words, "A people, that reads, will never die!" Then he went on to declare solemnly that writers were the true builders of all nations, peoples, races and tribes, because of the reading materials that they provided for their people. He was right and all the scholars, who were present, endorsed his belief and conviction.

Now it is just that that Dr. (Sr) Philomena Kharakor has done through her timely Book, entitled "**Biblical Influence on Pre-Independence Khasi Literature.**" Hence, we heartily congratulate her for this timely and laudable contribution to the building up of the Hynniewtrep people. And we are not only happy, but feel highly privileged to be called upon to write a short introduction to this important book.

"**Biblical Influence on Pre-Independence Khasi Literature**" is a great achievement. It is the very first pioneering work of its kind. And Dr. Philomena Kharakor has accomplished this gigantic work because of a keenly felt inner urge or a sub-conscious "categorical imperative", so to say, to trace the true and definite origin and a sure and guaranteed progress and development of Khasi literature as it has actually appeared on the scene of history.

As a matter of fact, Dr. Philomena Kharakor's present book is a milestone or landmark in the steady and sure progress and development of the Hynniewtrep's language and literature. Yes, had she not timely completed her long over-due book, all those, who sincerely love the Khasi language and its literature, would sub-consciously feel somewhat of a vacuum. But Dr. Philomena Kharakor has done it and the vacuum has been duly filled in.

All agree that, from a historical and human point of view, the Bible is a book par excellence. In the history of the literature of the whole human race, the Bible stands out unique and unrivalled. No collection of books is comparable with it. As it is genuinely human, its

appeal is universal and perennial. It fits in well with all nations, peoples, races and tribes. It is at home everywhere. It is like a clean and bright mirror, in which all the people of the world, alongwith their longings and aspirations, are clearly reflected. In it, all can distinctly see themselves in all their human aspects. Moreover, at the moment, there is no country where the Bible has not made its triumphal entry.

Such being the case, all the nations, peoples, races and tribes, who have come into a somewhat bold relief on the stage of history, have been heavily influenced by the Bible in their intellect, in their will and in their operative faculties. Hence, their thoughts, their words and actions are an echo of the thoughts, well expressed in the Bible, of the words, correctly uttered in the Bible, and of actions, done and well portrayed in the Bible.

Now of all the sectors of the peoples' life, it is literature that has received the greatest and definite impact from the Bible. Yes, there is hardly any book, that is really worthwhile and useful, that does not echo the thoughts, words and actions as found in the Bible. All those, who have read the Bible and other books in the world, will readily admit that the Bible has somewhat infiltrated truly everywhere.

And this is true especially with regards to the Hynniewtrep people. Because of some unexpected circumstances, and particularly due to the Bible, the Hynniewtrep people, from an almost unknown exis-tence, suddenly jumped on the public stage of history. On this stage of history, through the warming and creating rays of the Bible, the Hynniewtrep's precious Value System, their rich oral literature and culture woke up to a new life of promise. All this happened in circumstances when the Hynniewtrep could not but come into an encounter with the Bible. An inevitable but timely encounter, which immediately began to fulfil its historically imposed task ! The Hynniewtrep's Value System received its new Re-evaluation, their culture became more refined and in particular their oral literature became definitely articulated in its written form.

Now it is precisely this definite articulation of the Hynniewtrep's oral literature in its written form that Dr. Philomena Kharakor has picked up her particular field or work. But this field is immense. Hence, she limits herself to that important period of the history of the Hynniewtrep's written literature in pre-independence days. Painstakingly and critically, Dr. Philomena Kharakor traced the origin, the development and progress of Khasi written literature, through the influence of the Bible, from its nascent stage to its rather developed form just before Independence in 1947. She analyses carefully each Khasi author, pointing out where exactly the Bible has influenced him

most. Time and space do not permit us to dilate on this point. Suffice it to mention one immortal name : Soso Tham's writings and poems breathe in and out the fragrant air of the Bible.

Now from what has been said above, our readers will agree that Dr. Philomena Kharakor's book is invaluable for the public in general and in particular for all our Khasi scholars of the future. Dr. Philomena's book is bound to be a veritable asset for them. It will make their work easier and more profitable. Hence, we warmly recommend this book to one and all. It is our hope that it will enter into every home for the benefit of our children, who according to this writer, are showing an ever growing desire and enthusiasm for knowledge. Let us never forget the immortal words of our great poet, Elias Hopewell Khariong, "A people, that reads, will not die !" We want to live, and here is one of the best means : Dr. Philomena's book : **"Biblical Influence on Pre-Independence Khasi Literature."**

30th December, 1997

Sohblei Sngi Lyngdoh SDB
Sacred Heart College,
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PREFACE

Literature

Andre Rousseaux makes a distinction between the literature of happiness and the literature of salvation. The first one tries to show man how he can create a happier life for himself. With the intention of making man more human, the literature of happiness supposes that he is already human. It embellishes and improves his life. Whereas in the literature of salvation we have its antithesis. Man finds himself in a concrete situation about which he is apprehensive. He lives under threats and danger. He is faced with obstacles. Prior to all others, his basic problem is one of knowing whether it is still possible to be purely and simply "human", still possible to live human life. The literature of salvation which is marked by the anguish of not being able to live a human life takes its starting point from an awareness of this situation¹.

For Charles Du Bos literature is destined to express life when life becomes aware of itself. Without life, literature would have no content; but without literature life would be only a waterfall, a constant waterfall beneath which so many of us are submerged, a senseless waterfall that we are content to put up with, that we are incapable of understanding. According to Keats, life is the "Vale of Soul-making". The soul is the inner life, the place inhabited by the God who is both internal and external to ourselves.

For Jean-Paul Sartre, literature's purpose is to unmask human beings, in their particular "situation" of ensnared freedom." Not about the abstract man who could exist in any age and for the timeless reader, but about the man of his own time and for his contemporaries.

The Bible as Literature

Viewing literature as the literature of salvation, the Bible is definitely the literature par excellence. It has particular literary forms, such as epics, lyrics, dramas, essays, sonnets, philosophical works,

¹ Charles Moeller, *Man and Salvation in Literature*, tr. Charles Underhill Quinn, University of Notre Dame Press, Indiana, 1965. p. 6.

histories and the like. Epic cycles in Bible literature are usually attached to the names of the great patriarchs and their descendants. The peculiar influence of family groups directed the formation of the entire nation of Israel. The successes of these family groups would be expected in any formal account of history. But, interestingly, the failures of these patriarch are presented as well. The successes and failures of these men afford the opportunity to see God moving in these men's lives with a certain objectivity often missing in other ancient histories. The reader comes to know the true character of these patriarchs as they progressed personally and as their personality was projected in their descendants.

There is much speculation as to why the Hebrews first wrote histories of their civilisation. The suggestion is made that the Hebrews were the first to develop a national concept, a concept still strong and vigorous as the modern nation of Israel attests to. The uniqueness of their concept was that human affairs were developing under a divine purpose. The Hebrews interpreted God through man and his experiences rather than through nature and its processes. They wrote primarily to increase the nation's faith and to teach succeeding generations the ways of God. Aside from the sacred nature of these writings, they give readers the clearest and most abundant knowledge available of how men lived and thought in those early civilisations.

The Khasis' first literary book is the Bible. Initially, their approach to it was purely religious in motivation, but gradually, they were led to deeper and wider approaches: for building a substantial background of varied literary forms particularly its allusions and metaphors.

The particular advantage of the approach through allusions is that the reader may begin a systematic study of Bible stories and names of Bible characters and places, for religious language is not only a matter of giving names to clearly discernable objects but it is also a complex web of metaphor and symbols pointing towards an imperfectly understood reality. Metaphors are not merely ornaments, or decorative ways of saying what could be said literally. They provide the most important means by which language is stretched beyond the literal in order to talk to God. The quality of metaphorical language, according to Philip Wheelwright stretches understanding beyond the literal.² For meditation necessarily proceeds by metaphor, drawing the mind from the tangible realities of the senses to the realities of the

²T.R. Wright, *Theology and Literature, Signposts in Theology*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1988, p. 131.

spiritual world. The ability to use metaphor well implies a perception of resemblances, of the similarities between objects which allows one to be described.

Influence of the Bible on Khasi Literature

As a concluding hindsight, the study can with pride say that chapter 1 had surveyed the spiral growth of the late nineteenth and early centuries of pre-independence Khasi literature with minutest care, beginning with the advent of the Baptist missionaries from Serampore in 1813, followed by the Shella High School in 1823, the Welsh Methodist Calvinistic Presbyterian missionaries, the Roman Catholic missionaries from Germany, Italy, France and other European countries. Enabling the Khasis to read the Bible turned out to be the foremost priority which necessarily called for another option : the literacy drive. The main mission, that introduced the Bible and biblical stories in their elementary schools was the Welsh Calvinistic Methodist Presbyterian Mission. Moreover, the policy followed by this mission was to translate, adapt, and publish books of the Bible, biblical commentaries and biblical text books for their schools deepened the faith and love of the Khasi converts to such an extent, that the Bible became the indispensable asset of their homes. Thus, Khasi literature belongs first to the literature of salvation followed by the literature of happiness. From the point of view of character formation and schools and colleges established and run by missionaries to this day are among the best, and the cradle of Khasi literature is nothing else but the Bible.

Chequered by the urgent call to prepare Khasi text books for school children, Christian authors like John Roberts, Morkha Joseph, Mondon Bareh, Soso Tham, H. Elias, P.G. Gatphoh and others, would not have been able to tackle the task so well, if they did not have access to the stories from the Bible and the biblically influenced English literary works.

Findings and Conclusions of this Study

In conclusion, this study has been able to examine the poems, fiction and dramas in Chapters II, III and IV respectively. Chapter II analysed the works of 4 major poets and of a host of minor poets of pre-independence period. John Roberts' poems which dominated the academic syllabus for more than four decades had been analysed first. They were found to be deeply impregnated with Biblical didactic values. The study then turned its attention to the work of Morkha Joseph, the hidden poet of the period. A singular theologian, Joseph found poetry a perfect handmaid of his theological, biblical and oratorical mind.

Some of his original poems like "U Jumai Bah" and "Ka Jinghiar U Mynsiem" should fascinate Church history scholars too, because not only do they enrich Khasi poetry, but also reflects the pervasive influence of the Calvinistic Presbyterian Church among the Khasis then.

The third poet in the fray was Mondon Bareh who had published his poems in journals only. This could have been the reason why none of his poems were prescribed in the high school syllabus during the period. Presently his poems are in Denzille Bareh's *U Mawpun Jingtip*, 1957, in *Na Ka Thiar Ki Longshuwa*, (1981), in the journals *Ka Jingshai Na Ri Khasi-Pnar*, (1931-32) and *Ka Seng Presbyterian* and in Hamlet Bareh's *The Language and Literature of Meghalaya*, 1977. The study has also come to recognise Bareh as one of the major poets of the period, and to recognise the importance of a systematic and exhaustive compilation of all his work to enable scholars to have access to Bareh's full contribution to Khasi literature.

Poems from one of the most celebrated poets of Khasi literature, Soso Tham in *Ka Duitara Ksiar* had been analysed under two subtitles: translated and original poems, while his masterpiece, *Ki Sngi Barim U Hynñiew Trep* had been analysed under the following sub-headings: the mythical phase, the tribal democratic societal phase, and the transitional phase. Tham's conceptualisation of "U Simpyllieng" has been alluded to the rainbow of Noah's time and to the advent of the awaited Christian Messiah of the New Testament epoch.

After Tham's poems, the study focusses its attention on Elias's poems from "Ha Kper Ki 'Tiew Rosiperi" renamed *Ka Pansngiat Ksiar Ki Saw Aiom* in 1963. About 15 biblically influenced poems from this section have been analysed. Most of them have been composed in a puerile approach giving maximum joy to the children's concept of nature and creation. However, Elias's lofty collection, "Ka Saron Ksiar", has equally embellished the accounts of four major Khasi kingdoms with biblical images touching thereby the adults' meditative strand and the learned circle of Khasi society.

The chapter completed the analysis by devoting some pages for Amjad Ali's poems from *Ka Myntoi*, and for the textual analysis of some poems of well known Christian leaders like Joel Gatphoh, Robert Evans, Amirkha Khaiñ, B.H. Nalle Nonglait and of anonymous poets from *Na Ka Thiar Ki Longshuwa*, and from *U Lurshai* which bear witness to the imperceptible influence of the Bible in Khasi literate pre-independence society.

Chapter III too has provided with many biblically based stories.

However, the chapter is greatly indebted to John Roberts and Soso Tham for their translated stories, novelettes and novels. Roberts alone inserted as many as 12 short Bible stories and 3 novelettes from the biblical epic cycles in his readers *Ka Khasi Second Reader*, *Ka Khasi Third Reader* and *Ka Khasi Fourth Reader*. Through them Jewish patriarchs like Abraham, Moses and Joseph entered the realm of Khasi world that they seem to belong to the Khasi race. In fact, it would have been impossible for Khasi students passing through the school years without having studied the Bible or Bible stories in some classes. Biblical characters have become more familiar to Khasi students of this period than any of the indigenous heroes.

Moreover, *Ka Jingim Jong U Trai Jong Ngi* translated by Soso Tham from Dickens's *The Life of Our Lord*, and *Ka Jingiaid U Pilgrim* translated by John Roberts from Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*, gave Chapter III enough source for an in-depth analysis of two pre-independence Khasi fictions. Both books have been heavily influenced by the life and teachings of Jesus Christ.

Chapter IV mentions the dramas of the two sons of Jeebon Roy, Hari Charan Roy and Dino Nath Roy who translated and staged plays for the Seng Khasi between 1910-1924 and takes note of the effort made by the neutral theatrical clubs and the 'shnong' (localities) and the contribution of Peace Roy Pariat's between 1943 and 1952. Similarly, though the chapter records P.G. Gatphoh's "Kamai ia Ka Hok" (Earn Righteousness), 1950, which through oversight have been classed by former critics as a pre-independence play. But the same was not examined as it belongs to the post-independence period.

Mondon Bareh's *Ka Drama u Mihsngi*, is the only drama taken for analysis. It was completed and published in 1966 by Hamlet Bareh, his youngest son, but it was in actual fact, written between 1928 and 1932 before Mondon Bareh's premature death in 1932. *Ka Drama u Mihsngi* deals with the hypocrisy and evil that enter into the lives of some church leaders and on the pretensions prevailing among some of the educated Khasis. *Ka Drama Mihsngi* is, therefore, a satiric drama which ridicules the superficiality and spiritual corruption of Bareh's contemporary Christians. The play also reflects the attitude of the Khasi society of the period towards drama and theatre.

A glance at the appendices will not only give a better perspective of the analysis of pre-independence Khasi literature but will also open up avenues to readers who are interested in its evolution and growth during its initial years. The appendices will, it is hoped, acquaint readers to authors and works of the period.

Abbreviations of Bible Books

Acts	Acts	Judg	Judges
Amos	Amos	1 Kgs	1 Kings
1 Chr	1 Chronicles	2 Kgs	2 Kings
2 Chr	2 Chronicles	Lam	Lamentations
Col	Colosians	Lev	Leviticus
1 Cor	1 Corinthians	Lk	Luke
2 Cor	2 Corinthians	Mal	Malachi
Dan	Daniel	Mic	Micah
Deut	Deuteronomy	Mk	Mark
Eccl	Ecclesiastes	Mt	Matthew
Eph	Ephesians	Nah	Nahum
Esth	Esther	Neh	Nehemiah
Ex	Exodus	Num	Numbers
Ez	Ezekiel	Obad	Obadiah
Ezra	Ezra	1 Pet	1 Peter
Gal	Galatian	2 Pet	2 Peter
Gen	Genesis	Phil	Philippians
Hab	Habakkuk	Phlm	Philemon
Hag	Haggai	Prov	Proverbs
Heb	Hebrews	Ps	Psalms
Hos	Hosea	Rev	Revelation
Is	Isaiah	Rom	Romans
James	James	Ruth	Ruth
Jer	Jeremiah	1 Sam	1 Sam
Jn	John	2 Sam	2 Sam
1 Jn	1 John	Song	Song of Songs
2 Jn	2 John	1 Thes	1 Thessalonians
3 Jn	3 John	2 Thes	2 Thessalonians
Job	Job	1 Tim	1 Timothy
Joel	Joel	2 Tim	2 Timothy
Jon	Jonah	Tit	Titus
Josh	Joshua	Zech	Zechariah
Jude	Jude	Zeph	Zephaniah

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CHAPTER I

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

1.0. GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The Beginning of Formal Education

For many decades the general opinion of scholars regarding the beginning of formal education was unanimous in dating it back to 1841, the year Thomas Jones arrived at Cherrapunjee. In actual fact, Jones came to continue the work of the Baptist Missionaries and to a certain extent had the opportunity to reap their harvest, no matter how meagre it was. However, circumstances also had a part to play in this misdirection. The Shella High School was demolished in 1897 by the great earthquake and no attempt was made to retrieve its history from the Deputy Commissioner's archives where a record of its performance was preserved. Again the three schools opened by Alexander Lish in 1832, were abruptly stopped in 1838. Therefore, within the span of a generation, their existence was no longer remembered, and their memory wiped out of the hearts and minds of the people. On the other hand, the Welsh Calvinistic Methodist Presbyterian denomination had been very vigilant and faithful in maintaining its chronicles and in printing its achievements regularly from time to time. Added to this fidelity, the denomination had its numerous schools to publicise its educational work.

Thomas Jones re-opened the three primary schools at **Mawmluh**, **Mawsmal** and **Sohra** in 1842. Formerly, Lish had used Bengali script, but in 1842 later on Jones introduced the Roman script. After he had mastered the Khasi language sufficiently Jones sought approval from his superiors in Wales and the consent of the local Syiem and his advisers to replace the Bengali script with the Roman script. Thus Jones' revolutionary step became the landmark for the beginning of primary education among the Khasis.

This opinion became all the more prevalent among educationists and amateur writers of the recent decades (from the '60s) because they had no facts to think otherwise. The tendency to take history for granted had led even minorities like the Seng Khasi, the Catholic missionaries and the Rama Krishna missionaries to keep their records of their contribution behind doors as private properties. Therefore, apart from the hazy idea that there were some Brahmanical schools during the pre-Christian period, there was no record to show that there

were formal schools before the coming of the Welsh missionaries. All available information that was circulated among readers began with Thomas Jones. Moreover, the phenomenal literary contribution of John Roberts and other giant missionaries from Wales who left a legacy of school books—the *Khasi Readers* and their *Baible* to their Presbyterian denomination doubled the publicity of the Methodist influence.

Education in the Pre-Christian Period

As the pendulum of literacy swung forward there was a hope and a dream that its retreating force would equally give an insight into the buried past. This dream came true in 1993 when a Rama Krishna past pupil, Shri E. Weston Dkhar released his work *Primary Education In the Khasi And Jaiñtia Hill* for public perusal. In black and white, Dkhar took the history of primary education further back to 1823 to Shella and not to Alexander Lish in 1832 or to Thomas Jones in 1842.

According to Dkhar, well-to-do sons and daughters of Shella were sent to Jaiñtiapur, the citadel of learning and culture in the far end of East Bengal. Literacy then was a luxury of the elite who had the privilege to sit at the feet of the gurus who ran Brahmanical schools in that city. It was compulsory for students to opt for two major languages i.e. Sanskrit, Bengali or English besides the other subjects offered in these schools. However, the presence of a handful of literates in the village was like a drop of water in the ocean. They could not improve the situation of the poor majority. Instead, there was a danger of widening a gap between the poor and the rich. This moved the leaders to contemplate seriously about beginning a village school which would be relatively accessible to every child of school-going age.

Shella School

The problem was soon solved by the Seng Bakhraw of the four Duwakdars¹ of the Shella Confederacy who jointly arrived at a resolution to open their own primary school for the benefit of everyone in the village. So a primary school was opened at Pdia Bazar, Shella, in 1823 and two Bengali teachers, Shri Thakurdhon Mukherjee and Shri Tarini Ghosh were invited to teach and were offered a salary of 25 and 20 silver coins annually².

¹ The Confederacy of Shella is governed by a college of four Duwakdars who represent the four seasons of the year and the four directions of the universe.

² E. Weston Dkhar, *Primary Education In The Khasi and Jaintia Hills*, Sevenhut Enterprise, Shillong, 1993, pp. 41-42.

The children were taught English, Sanskrit and Bengali after the pattern of the Bengali schools in East Bengal and it is said that the first two students who joined it were young men of 15 and 20 years. The Shella Primary School made rapid and steady progress till it became an M.E. school in 1839 so that by 1845 it could produce 46 students who had completed Standard III and Standard VI known as Standard Plus and Standard Minor. Similarly, the history of this M.E. School, with the exception of a short financial stress in 1856-57, was that of success. It was made into a Proceeding High School in 1860-61.³

Medium of Education and Prominent Students

Judging from the extant undeciphered records that were kept in the Deputy Commissioner's office, United Khasi and Jaintia Hills and the Shella Confederacy state records, the Shella dialect was used as a medium of instruction with English, Sanskrit or Bengali as second and third languages respectively.⁴

The High School served the people progressively till it was demolished by the earthquake of 1897. Laithat was one of the outstanding students who accepted the government job as a 'dubasia' or an interpreter during Captain Lister's time at Saitsohpen and who assisted Thomas Jones in his work of translation.⁵ Konrai, Norsing and Ksan were some of his contemporaries who though not mentioned by name could have helped Alexander Lish as primary teachers in 1832⁶ and perpetuated the line of literates in the person of Larshai, Nising and Jom who in turn staffed Thomas Jones' primary schools of Mawsmi, Mawluh and Sohra in 1842.⁷

The list of Khasi scholars who studied in the School between 1845-1897 includes Jeebon Roy, J.J.M. Nichols Roy, Prof. R.R. Thomas, Jokidhon Roy Chyne Wahadar, Sloin Duwakdar, Thu Along, Bising, Jaiong, Ador, Kisor Swett, Mohes Swett and others. But Weston regrets that none of them made any attempt to introduce a convention of the Khasi alphabet.⁸

³ E. Weston Dkhar, *Primary Education*, op. cit., p. 45.

⁴ E. Weston Dkhar, *Primary Education*, op. cit., p. 47.

⁵ E. Weston Dkhar, *Primary Education*, op. cit., p. 42.

⁶ H. Bareh, *A Short History Of Khasi Literature*. Shillong, 1979, p. 20.

⁷ D. Ropmay, *Ka Centenary History Ka Balang Presbyterian*, Shillong, 1989, p. 2.

⁸ A. Jones, *Ka History Jong Ka Balang (1841-1966)*, Shillong, 1966, p. 9.

⁹ E. Weston Dkhar, *Primary Education*, op. cit., p. 47.

Though Dkhar's comment is valid to a certain extent, such expectation would seem far-fetched and unrealistic for anyone to expect students who had been more exposed to the Bengali way of life to introduce another script with which they had no contact nor were familiar. Dkhar even failed to acknowledge the contribution of the Shella High School to the formation of great men like Jeebon Roy Mairom, J.J.M. Nichols-Roy, his brother Prof. R.R. Thomas and others who had contributed to the growth of Khasi literature and to the Khasi community as a whole.

The Shella High School did contribute also to the smooth changeover at the time of Thomas Jones for Jones was assisted in his initial task by Laithat, Jom and others who were students of the Shella High School and converts of Lish. They were also Jones' first teachers who implemented the change. Thomas Jones would have found the task unsurmountable too were it not for them. Therefore though it is fitting to say that Thomas Jones is the "Father of Khasi Alphabet," it is not correct to say that primary education started with the coming of the Welsh Calvinistic Methodist Presbyterian missionaries in 1842. The influence of the Shella School is still noticeable in the indelible work of Jeebon Roy, J.J.M. Nichols-Roy and others who had carried the torch of literacy to Shillong and other parts of the region. They deserve a share in the glory of having Khasi recognised as a vernacular language as Sir Archdale had dreamt.⁹

1.1. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Education and the Bible

Education has been recognised to be the quickest diffuser of ignorance and superstition in particular, and the most effective agent for bringing about comprehensive social change on the people in general. It is also an accepted fact that education improves the quality of personal and community living and mobilises healthy personal and group dynamics. Christian missionaries are among the first to champion the cause of education by opening elementary and high schools wherever they evangelise. Their friendly approach to pupils in the school, and the people they visit and relate to bring about a lasting influence on the educands and the evangelised. Their edifying attachment to Jesus Christ and His Message in the Bible invited imitation from all who see them.

⁹ *The Shillong Government High School Souvenir Shillong*, 1980, p. 5.

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