

PROGRESS OF EDUCATION IN ASSAM

RENU DEBI



This book seeks to present an overall picture of the progress of education in Assam since the inception of British rule in this part of the country with particular emphasis on the period from 1882 down to the late thirties thereby also indicating the lines of development till the eve of independence.

Education is not something fragmented. It is divided into primary, secondary, collegiate, higher, university, etc., for functional purposes only since all stages are important almost equally. There are also segments and specific fields, like education for weaker sections, women, rural education, etc. The linkages in education have been identified in the study with a critical estimate of the policies pursued or changed from time to time. What emerges is an integrated study of the state of education and its development covering a significant period in our educational life.

Rs. 165/-

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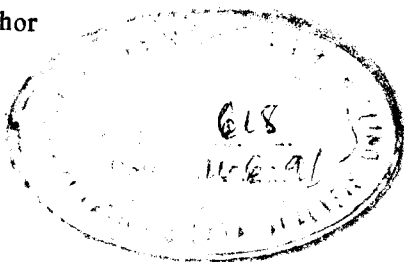
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Historical Background : Progress of Education in Assam from 1826 to 1881

Assam came under the British in 1826. The British could establish their sway in this north-eastern region of India because the Ahom rulers, exhausted as they were by internal dissension, failed to protect their subjects from the ravages wrought by repeated Burmese invasions.¹ Internal conflicts and the repeated invasions emanating from Burma destroyed the old educational institutions and the need arose to lay the beginnings of a new pattern of education in conformity with the requirements of the new regime. In other provinces under the British, the indigenous system of education flourished at the time of extension of British rule.² Assam's educational institutions consisted in *Pathshalas* for Hindus, *tols* for Brahmins and upper class Hindu, *Madrassas* for Muslims, and *Satras* for the Vaisnavites. The anarchy of the later Ahom times and the Burmese invasions very largely destroyed this indigenous system and, therefore, new institutions were required to be created under the patronage of the new regime.

With the expansion of British rule in India as a whole, knowledge of English became a historic necessity both for reasons of administration and increasing commercial intercourse.

Before the Charter Act of 1833, there was no noticeable progress in the field of education in view of the lack of efforts to direct the educational policies of different parts of India.³ There was also the controversy between the orientalist and the advocates of Anglicised education.⁴ As far as Assam was concerned, David Scott, Agent to the Governor-General for the whole eastern frontier, flavoured the encouragement of oriental learning by improving the indigenous system of education. It was his belief that an undue emphasis on English would not only wound local sentiment and exacerbate feelings but also generate misapprehension in the popular mind to the disadvantage of the rulers. Scott's ideas were largely accepted by the Government of the East India company with the result that the orientalist view prevailed at the official level as a general policy.⁵ This continued from 1813 to 1834 after which changes were brought about in favour of English education.

Scott proposed to encourage the indigenous schools by land grants. This proposal was accepted by the Government of India in October 1826 and, eleven schools were established, mostly in lower Assam. These schools imparted teaching in the *Sastras* through the medium of Sanskrit. Some schools introduced a broader curriculum: this was the case with a school founded in 1833 in Dosh Darrang by Lieutenant James Matthie, Collector and Magistrate of Northern Central Assam.⁶ Further, by way of popularising the schools, Adam White, Collector of Gauhati, provided opportunities for employment to several products of such schools in Government Service.⁷ And, at the instance of Scott, certain ex-officials of the Ahom days who were educated in the indigenous schools were absorbed in the Revenue and Judicial Departments.

However, with the consolidation of British rule in Assam and the consequent introduction of new rules and regulations pertaining to general administration and the collection of land revenue,⁸ the products of the indigenous system of education were found ineffective in the matter of running the services of the new administrative set-up. The European officials found the local officials incompetents in the matter of maintaining

written documents, files, and accounts. Therefore, the need arose to employ English educated persons not only to serve as a link between the rulers and the ruled but also to man the lower levels of administration. The fresh recruits were the Bengali clerks. Assam came to be occupied by the British nearly seventy years after the establishment of their domination over Bengal. Naturally enough it was easy for the Bengali Intelligentsia to be trained in the English language and this was how Bengali clerks were brought to Assam by the new rulers. In course of time the Bengalis came to occupy an influential position in the administrative services and a certain influence in the professions as well. The introduction of elements from outside Assam, or for that matter the creation of the new *Amolaks* appeared to create a hiatus between the government and the governed, and such a situation was not conducive to efficient administration.⁹ As for the Bengali immigrants, some settled permanently in Assam while others went back to their province. But whether as settlers or sojourners, 'they maintained their communications with the land of their origin and held themselves as a people apart'.¹⁰ Be that as it might be, the people of Assam generally did not feel at home with the new administration and the result was the generation of discontent among them.¹¹

David Scott was mainly responsible for developing the principles of administration in both upper and lower Assam. He could feel the simmering discontent among the people, particularly among sections of the ox-nobility and the upper classes. In order to meet the problems at the administrative level, Scott proposed to appoint more local people in Government service. In order to facilitate this, it was found necessary to establish schools imparting teaching in English. Scott's plan was to establish one English school at Gauhati so that the Assamese products from the school could at least be absorbed as clerks in the administrative service. But Scott's death in 1831¹² led to postponement of the implementation of the scheme. However, one school was established at Gauhati with the help of Christian missionaries for imparting instruction through the medium of Bengali.¹³ Obviously, English education was yet to come and Assamese was relegated to the background. The

British rulers were no novices and they must share the main responsibility for the subordinate status to which Assamese was reduced.¹⁴ It was in 1836 that Assamese was dislodged and Bengali became the court language and medium of instruction in schools.

The need for more schools under Government auspices to provide instruction to Assamese youths was keenly felt by Captain Jenkins, the Commissioner of Assam (1834-61). He was apparently perturbed over the fact that it was the non-Assamese who virtually monopolised all the posts in Government offices. Writing to the Government of India, he expressed the view that the few Assamese 'in their present uneducated state do not suffice to carry on the duties' of the courts whose offices were "mostly filled by natives of Sylhet and Rangpore;" in such a situation, the old families of Assam were losing their influence 'in their own native province': 'this state of things appear to me pregnant with evil and I know no other method by which it could be remedied than by the Government taking some active measure to provide instruction for the Assamese Youths.¹⁵ In his despatch on the state of education in the province, Jenkins pleaded with the Government of India to establish schools to impart English education to the Assamese youths at each of the *Sadar* stations, i.e., Gauhati, Darrang, Nowgong, and Biswanath. Jenkins estimated that the entire scheme would involve an annual expenditure of Rs. 12, 000/- till the time when local teachers would be available, he felt that teachers capable of teaching English and Bengali would have to be brought from outside at a salary not exceeding Rs. 30/- per month. Considering the backwardness of the province and Government's responsibility for education, Jenkins did not consider the proposed expenditure as too large.¹⁶

The Government of India referred the proposal for consideration by the General Committee of Public Instruction and it recommended the establishment of one school only at Gauhati. The Gauhati English school was opened in 1835 with a European Headmaster, A. Singer, at a monthly salary of Rs. 150/-.¹⁷ The school made a slow but steady progress, the

enrolment having risen from 58 in 1835 to 340 at the end of 1840. In April 1838, William Robinson succeeded Singer as Headmaster of the School. Robinson wrote thus about the School in 1841: 'the gradual yet continued increase of its members shows, that the institution has achieved one great stride towards its right position in the country. The natives begin to appreciate the advantages to be derived from it, they are willing to give a trial and it is presumed will quickly draw the desired conclusion for themselves. We would therefore confidently anticipate that this institution, in the course of a few years, will become an important provincial College and be the means of disseminating knowledge in the neighbouring districts.'¹⁸ Robinson's words turned out to be prophetic indeed. The School bore different designations at different times. Starting with the name of Gowahatty English School, it came to be known also as Gowahatty Government Seminary, Gowahatty Government School, and Gowahatty Zilla School. In 1864, the Inspector of Schools of the North-East Division wrote to the Director of Public Instruction, Bengal, that "the only way of raising up a large number of students for the college and thus hastening the period of establishing it is to increase the establishment of the Gowahatty School."¹⁹ In 1865 the Director of Public Instruction proposed to the Government of Bengal to raise the annual allotment to the Gauhati School to the tune of Rs. 12,000/- from the fixed sum of Rs. 2, 616/- with a view to placing the institution on the footing of a 'Collegiate School'²⁰: this was to be a preparatory step towards the establishment of a College for the province of Assam. Acting on this proposal, the Government of Bengal 'strongly recommended' to the Government of India that both for reasons of economy and for political grounds of endeavouring to train up natives of the province for offices of responsibility and trust, the Gowahatty Zilla School should be upgraded as a 'High School' or 'Collegiate School'.²¹ The Government of India accepted the recommendation and thus with effect from May 1866, the Gauhati Zilla School was converted to a High or Collegiate School affiliated to the Calcutta University up to the first examination in Art.²² And, with effect from New Years Day 1870, this 'School' enjoying the status of a College was

affiliated in Law.²³ Thus the Gauhati Zilla School may rightly be regarded as the harbinger of Modern educational advancement in Assam.

The following table²⁴ gives the comparative figures of enrolment and fee income of the school for a period of five years:

Year	College Department		School Department	
	No. of Students	Fees and fines	No. of Students	Fees and fines
1868-69	8	£12 18 0	184	£236 4 0
1869-70	15	£34 10 0	193	£256 3 2
1870-71	17	£55 11 8	222	£272 6 8
1871-72	6	£44 12 8	208	£290 11 2
1872-73	4	£30 17 8	199	£310 6 8

The College Department had to struggle for its existence all the time. In 1872-73, there were 4 students but none passed in the first Arts examination. The Law Department also did not show any promise. In order to attract more students at the college level, the fee rate was reduced from Rs 8 to Rs 5, but this did not lead to the desired result. At the school level, enrolment of students did not exceed 200, excepting for the years 1870-71 and 1871-72. Reduction in Government grant from Rs 1,200 to Rs 900 in 1873 led to increase in the fee rates and this factor might have led to reduced enrolment in the school section.²⁵ The performance of students in examinations was frankly discouraging.²⁶ The teachers blamed it upon the students while the Inspectors of Schools attributed it to defective methods of teaching.²⁷ Anyway, Col. Keating, the Chief Commissioner of Assam, restored the school to its former status

by abolishing the College classes in 1876. Unsatisfactory results in examinations as also financial exigencies were responsible for the reduction of the School's status. However, a redeeming feature was discovered: it was that the abolition of the College classes would compel Assamese students to study elsewhere thereby offering them opportunities to see "something more of the world than their own province."²⁸

The abolition of the college classes was disliked by the enlightened parents as they wanted their sons to be educated in a local institution. This gave rise to a concerted move for the re-establishment of the College classes in the Gauhati High School. In 1880, a petition signed by 1,919 persons was submitted to the Commissioner, Sir S. Bayley, to this effect. Another petition with the same purpose was submitted to the next commissioner in 1881. Though the prayer was not granted, a scheme of granting an unlimited number of scholarships was introduced from 1 January 1882 whereby every Assamese passing the Entrance Examination was to get a scholarship of Rs 20 per month to prosecute his studies in a Calcutta College.²⁹ Then, Collegiate education in Assam did not thrive till 1901 when the Cotton College was established at Gauhati.

However, pre-collegiate education was not neglected. The Gauhati School was made the centre for training Primary School teachers also: the normal School class was attached to it and the Middle Vernacular School (lower section of the High School) was also amalgamated with the High School. Further a survey class to train mandals and Mauzddars, and a gymnastic class for promoting physical culture were also attached to it. A Boarding house was opened in 1883. A dispensary was established in a room and the Doctor's salary was met from voluntary contributions from the pupils. The law classes were reopened in 1890.³⁰ Persian classes were also maintained in the Gauhati School. It was strictly remarked that in the Gauhati Zilla School 'the seed of all future educational progress in Assam was sown. It was thus the forerunner of the Cotton College, the Earle Law College, the Jorhat Normal School and the Jhalukbari Survey School and the Department of

Mahammadan Education.³¹ At the same time, it deserves to be noted that the abolition of the College classes in the Gauhati School acted as a certain damper on the progress of Collegiate education in Assam. The Award of scholarships to Entrance-passed students certainly enabled some of them to prosecute higher studies in Calcutta. But there was no appreciable rise in the number of Collegiate students both for the inadequacy in the amount of scholarship and the distance involved.

The rulers had their own administrative and political reasons for introducing a system of education aimed at inculcating a sense of loyalty to the Raj. The upper classes made a favourable response and their children tried to secure maximal advantages under the new system. With the introduction of the new revenue system in 1834, the upper classes especially felt the necessity for educating their children lest the 'Amolahs' should indulge in cheatings in the matter of distribution of land. As observed by Jenkins, "those losing political power could perceive that there was no other road to distinction than through the attainment of superior information when the means of deriving it was put within their reach, it was natural that they would not allow themselves to be surpassed by those of inferior ranks".³² The advantage of English education was made manifest by the appointment of products of such education to such administrative posts as were open for local recruits. In 1853 about 41 posts were filled up from among English-educated persons they were appointed as Head clerks, Second clerks, Peskars, Mohorirs, School Masters, Chowdrees, and Nakal Nabises.³³ This process naturally encouraged others to take to English education and the advantage was taken mainly by the sons of the erstwhile upper and the new middle classes.

Effective British policy in the field of Indian education began with Macaulay's appointment to the office of President of the Committee of Public Instruction which was split into orientalist and Anglicist factions, Macaulay defeated the orientalists in the committee and began his work in the field of education by presenting his famous minute to Governor-General Bentick on 2 February 1835.³⁴ Storn as he was in advocating

the Anglicist theory of education, Macaulay favoured the creation of a class of men as 'interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern' men who would be 'Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinion, in morals, and in intellect.'³⁵ This class of English-educated persons was expected to filter knowledge to the mass of the population, hence the downward filtration theory. This class was expected to refine the Vernacular dialects of the country, to enrich, them with terms of science borrowed from the Western nomenclature, and to render them by degrees fit vehicles for conveying knowledge to the great mass of population.³⁶ Macaulay's thesis was accepted in the Government resolution of 7 March 1833. Macaulay had undoubtedly displayed a class approach to the problem of Indian Education and it was to benefit the upper and middle classes of the urban society.

Sections of people availed themselves of the advantages of English education mainly with a view to securing jobs. But knowledge never filtered to the masses of people as such. The educational despatch of 19 July 1854 by Charles Wood opened a new era in the history of Indian education because it obliged the Government of India to work out a comprehensive plan of education covering all stages from primary school to the University. In other words, education became a state responsibility. But the rulers undue emphasis on the English language created a wide gulf between the English-education intelligentsia and the masses of people. The downward filtration theory and the serious neglect of mass education appeared to create a system of perpetuating widespread illiteracy. While all this is true, a certain progress was noticeable at some levels of education.

Secondary education in Assam for the period under review registered progress both through state patronage and public venture. By 1870-71, the following picture emerged: besides the Gauhati Zilla school, there were, in the Kamrup District, six Government middle vernacular schools attended by 300 pupils, and the cost of maintaining the schools stood at Rs. 2,724, there was one Government English and middle Vernacular School in the Nowgong district while in the Sibsagar

district there functioned one High School and two Middle Vernacular Schools. With the introduction of grant-in-aid system encouraging local enterprises, the number of Government schools fell. In 1856-57, the number of Government Vernacular schools was 11, it fell to 2 in 1871-72 while the aided Middle Vernacular Schools increased from 0 to 21, in Sibsagar.³⁷ In 1873-74, there were 71 Middle Vernacular, 11 Middle English and 6 High Schools in Assam.

Taking the province as a whole, this could not be said to be a happy rate of progress. In some cases, certain schools were upgraded to the level of High Schools: The Karimganj Middle English School was raised to a High School in 1894 and earlier the Habiganj Middle English School attained that status in 1883. Very few schools were developed to the Entrance standard.

For long Assam was having her indigenous system of imparting elementary education through formal institutions like *Tols*, *Madrassas* and *Pathshalas*. As with other people, religion constituted a distinct phase in their culture. As people were naturally inclined to read religious scriptures, they learnt the alphabets and the method of reading. An informal way of learning the three R's was prevalent. It has been recorded that in Kamrup where nearly the whole population was Vaisnavite, reading the scriptures or acquiring knowledge in them through hearing from others formed an essential part of popular life. Man of comparatively lower status in the social ladder were also infected with this habits.³⁸ Further, there was a type of Schools which could be called, in the absence of a better expression, 'reading schools', because nothing beyond reading was attempted in these schools. By 1873, there were in Kamrup about 200 reading schools attended by 2,000 pupils.³⁹ Such schools were scattered in other districts also but their number could not be determined exactly due to their temporary existence.

Important developments took place in the field of primary education. The number of primary school increased from 47

in 1843-44 to 63 in 1853-54 and 513 in 1873-74. This remarkable increase was due to the introduction of a new scheme from the financial year in 1873-74. In 1872, a sum of Rs 400,000 was sanctioned at the instance of Sir George Campbell for the spread of mass education through indigenous schools in Bengal. It was proposed that after departmental inspection, teachers should be given stipends between Rs 2 and Rs 5 per mensem. This nominal subvention was intended to supplement the aid habitually given by the villagers for maintaining the schools. It was the extension of this grant-in-aid system to Assam that led to the increased growth of primary schools. Before the introduction of the system, there were in Kamrup district 64 primary schools attended by 2,137 pupils in 1872: with the introduction of the system, the number of school receiving aid rose to 146 attended by 3969 pupils. In Nowgong district, the number of *pathsalas* rose from 39 with 1,373, pupils to 85 with 2,357 pupils. In other districts, however, there was no noticeable advancement due to the slow growth rate in the establishment of schools.⁴⁰

The grant-in-aid system stimulated the growth of *Pathsalas* and this was particularly so in the Kamrup district. Hunter records showed that about 100 such schools were established attracting official attention in the form of *Pathsalas* Grants: more than half of such schools were intended for the instruction of girls and adult males, and about a dozen of the schools were devoted to the teaching of Arabic, Urdu or Persian to Mahommedans.⁴¹ Expansion of schools did not, however, mean improvement in the quality of teaching which depended on a number of factors: trained teachers, good building and equipment, necessary provisions and facilities for teachers and students, and, last but not least, adequate supervision. Government grant appeared to diminish the scale of popular contribution to the maintenance of schools. Further, the small number of the inspectorate (with one inspector, nine deputy inspectors and twelve sub-inspectors) could not be expected to cover the *Pathsalas* scattered in areas of wide distance and sometimes in places not easily accessible in rural areas and hilly places.

After the separation of Assam from Bengal in 1874, a

separate Department of education was established. This led to increased contact between the authorities and the schools. Now the Department could pay closer attention to elementary and secondary education. The number of primary schools increased from 513 to 1,760 in 1881-82. Out of these schools, 7 were Government schools with 187 pupils, 1,256 aided schools with 35,643 pupils, and 497 indigenous schools with 9,733 pupils.⁴²

The Christian missionaries also deserved credit for promoting the cause of educational progress in Assam. They revealed marvels of adjustment to circumstances. They learnt the language of the people and acquainted themselves with the traditions of local culture and habits of doing things. In a sense, they ceased to be 'foreign' at least in the matter of promoting the growth of education in the place of their work. The style of work of the missionaries earned for them the confidence of the people and their self-sacrificing spirit led them to traverse long distances even to normally inaccessible places for the purpose of establishing mission societies. Rev. Nothon Brown and Rev. A. T. Cutter were the pioneers among the missionaries: they started their work of founding schools after three months of their settlement at Sadiya in March 1839. Their mission was to spread the message of christianity, and education was considered the most suitable medium through which the work of evangelisation could be extended. The pioneers were joined by other of their fraternity. The Drowning of Rev. Thomas while travelling by boat *on route* to Sadiya,⁴³ the sufferings of other missionaries due to diseases in an unhealthy climate and natural discomfort in a foreign land could not dampen the spirit of the missionaries. They paid special attention to the hilly areas. After the revolt of the Singphos and Khamatis which continued for several years after 1830, the missionaries came to Sibsagar from Sadiya and started their great work in the plains district. By 1844, the American Baptist mission established 14 schools at Sibsagar. Twelve schools were established by the Welsh Mission in Khasi, Garo and Naga Hills and also in Nowgong. The missionaries work extended to the hills and plains alike, although, in the absence of Government

endeavour due to inaccessibility, they constituted the sole agency for educational progress for a long time in the hill areas.

The most important feature of missionary activity in the field of education was their emphasis on education through the mother tongue. In hill areas the hill dialects were put into written form in the Roman scripts through which education was imparted to the hillmen. In the plains, it fell to the missionaries to uphold the claim of the local language. In 1836 Bengali was introduced as the court language and medium of instruction in schools and naturally enough, the Assamese resented this. The missionaries had methods in their work and beyond the realm propaganda alone in defence of Assamese, they did solid work to establish the rightful claim of Assamese. They prepared textbooks and books on Assamese grammar, translated the Bible into Assamese, and Bronson prepared an Anglo-Assamese dictionary with 14,000 words.⁴⁴ To the missionaries goes the credit of publishing the first ever magazine in Assamese, ARONODOI, published in 1846 from Sibsagar. ARONODOI became a powerful vehicle of the Assamese language. The missionaries also laid stress on English education so that local scholars could extend their sphere of activities and jobs. At their instance, such schools were established in places, like Sibsagar, Silchar and Sylhet. Primary schools also claimed a great deal of their attention.

The missionaries acted as pioneers in another field, namely female education. The wives of the missionaries established 'Zonana' schools. But here they were confronted with a number of difficulties. First, local customs disfavoured the practice of school going among the married ladies, secondly, a difficulty was posed in the matter of fixing school hours for married ladies, thirdly, such married ladies as were available for instruction attended schools for some months or days only. The result was that there was very slow progress in female education. Though the effort of the missionaries in this regard met with failure, they deserved appreciation as the trail blazers of female education in Assam.

The slow progress of education in Assam during the early period of British rule could be attributed to a number of factors. The rulers had to pay considerable attention to their political necessity of suppressing the insurrections of the tribal people in the hills and manifestations of discontent in the plains. The need of consolidation of the Raj stood uppermost in the minds of the administrators. Whatever progress in education was in evidence, it was mainly with a view to training men to run the lower administrative services. Further, Assam was governed as an appendage of the unwieldy province of Bengal.⁴⁵ It was largely inaccessible and very few Lt. Governors took the trouble of visiting it. The administrative officers never really tried to assess the particular needs of Assam. It was ruled as if conditions in Assam and Bengal were similar. The interior of the land was mostly outside the pale of the Governments consideration and concern. When General neglect prevailed, particular attention to education was unthinkable.⁴⁶

Another important reason for the slow progress was due to the displacement of the language of the Assamese people as the medium of instruction in schools. Introduction of Bengali as the medium as also the court language resulted in a setback not only to the development of education but also to the growth of language and culture of the local people. The rulers wanted interpreters to act as a link with the people while implementing administrative policies. Mainly Bengali clerks served as a link between the rulers and ruled. Assam came under British sway nearly seventy years after Bengal. Therefore, it was easy for the Bengali intelligentsia to master the English language and this was how they came to Assam after British occupation and occupied an influential position in the professions as well.⁴⁷ They displayed an unfriendly attitude towards the Assamese language and went to the extent of declaring that Assamese was an offshoot of the Bengali language. At the same time it is important to remember that no less a person than Robinson held that the language spoken in Assam was essentially the same as Bengali. The British were expert rulers and it is not likely that they would introduce a measure without knowing anything about the matter.⁴⁸ It is more reasonable to

hold that the British relegated Assamese to the background mainly for administrative convenience. But it was a dangerous proposition to impart education through a medium other than mother tongue. Such a policy had the inevitable effect of thwarting the development of the young mind. There was naturally a retardation in the process of expansion of education. Those completing elementary education under the system could speak neither Bengali nor write Assamese correctly. The declared purpose of Scott and Jenkins to educate the local people with a view to associating them with the administration was wilfully nullified in practice.

Deep indeed was the resentment of the people over the denial of the rightful status to Assamese in the scheme of education. Vocal sections of the people received the unstinted support of the missionaries in their rightful cause. Bronson in his preface to the Anglo-Assamese Dictionary wrote about the beauty of the Assamese language which had distinct characteristics. G.F. Nicholl in his 'Manual of the Bengali Language' wrote that Assamese was not, as many supposed it to be, a corrupt dialect of Bengali but a distinct and co-ordinate tongue having with Bengali a common source of current vocabulary. George Grierson emphatically stated that Assamese literature was as old, if not older, than Bengali. And ARONODOI was ever insistent in its advocacy of Assamese.⁴⁹ The people on their part demanded recognition of the rightful status of Assamese. Anandram Dhekial Phukan gave powerful expression to the popular demand. The strength of the popular demand had to be acknowledged in high quarters also. Four years before the significant years of 1857. Andrew John Molfat Mills, a judge of the Sadar court in Calcutta, came to Assam to report on the administration in the province. Even he in his report laid emphasis on the introduction of Assamese as medium of instruction in schools. Thus, the Government had to declare Assamese as the medium of instruction in schools and as the language of the court in 1873.⁵⁰ Certain necessary follow-up measures were also taken. It was provided that Bengali could be taught separately when twelve boys in a class desired it. Every subject in the upper classes of High school was to be

taught in Assamese if Assamese books were available, in the alternative, it should be done either in Bengali or English. As the Assamese language returned after a long exile, there was a dearth of text-books in the language. So, the Inspector of schools was directed to take steps for the preparation of text-books in Assamese. A text-book committee was formed for the purpose and it encouraged authors by the declaration of prizes for successful authors. Translation work was also encouraged in the initial stage. All this served for educational progress in the province.

When Assam was constituted as a separate province in 1874 with Col. Keatinge as the Chief Commissioner, a separate Directorate of Public Instruction was also created. Under the Directorate, there functioned one Inspector of Public Instruction, 9 Deputy Inspectors and 12 Sub-Inspectors.⁵¹ This led to an increase in the number of schools and in student enrolment. The increase was more remarkable in the case of Primary Schools. The following table served to indicate the educational picture for the period.⁵²

<i>Type of School</i>	<i>Total in 1873-74</i>	<i>Total in 1881-82</i>
High School	6	11
Middle English School	11	38
Middle Vernacular School	71	44
Primary School	513	1351(Male-1280 Female-71)
Special types of School	X	11

The rise in the number of Middle English Schools and the fall in the number of Middle Vernacular Schools served to indicate the increasing enthusiasm for English education. In 1881-82, the number of students in the rolls of the High Schools was 2,264 and a total of 2,938 students studied in the Middle

English Schools whereas 2,984 students only studied in the Middle Vernacular Schools. English education was cultivated with an important purpose and this was 'employment of the natives of the soil in the service of their own province'.⁶³

For the period under review, besides the state, local bodies, missionaries, private associations and individuals served as important agencies for the spread of education in Assam. The organisation of the education system took the following shape by 1881:

- (1) Collegiate education—No college was established but scholarships were given to those who wished to study in colleges in Calcutta.
- (2) Secondary education was imparted in three types of institutions, namely, the High schools, Middle schools and Middle Vernacular schools.
- (3) Primary schools were divided into upper primary consisting of two classes, and lower primary schools. These schools were established and maintained by the Education Department, local bodies, or private associations.
- (4) Special schools consisted of 'Guru' training classes, and school devoted to professional studies.

The Ripon reforms of 1882 as also the recommendations of the Indian education commission opened a new phase in the educational advancement of India. A general review of the policy of the Government during the entire period of our study will be made in the next chapter to understand the approach of the Government to education in India upto dyarchy.

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- no. 1 dated 14 November 1823, from the Secretary to the Government of India to Mr. David Scott, appointing him as the Agent to the Governor-General for the whole of the Eastern frontier, RAEBA for 1905-06, p. 26.
2. Vide *Selections from the Records of the Government of Madras*; No. 11, Appendices A-D; A.N. Basu, (ed.), ADAM'S REPORT, pp. 139-40.
 3. Atmanand Mishra, *Educational Finance in India* (Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1962). p. 23.
 4. Vide J.A. Richey, *Selections from Educational Records*, part II (1840-1859), (Calcutta, 1922), pp. 116-34.
 5. *Political Consultations*, Bengal 1834, 10 July, No. 211; *Revenue Consultations*, Bengal 1836, 1 March No. 40; Bengal Education Report, 1843-44, Appendix 5, p. cxiii Robinson also suggested encouragement of indigenous schools, vide Robinson to the Director of Public Instruction, 24 November 1855, *Bengal Public Consultations*, 3 September 1857, No. 159, Bengal Education Report. 1851-52, pp. 168-71.
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20. Letter from the Director of Public Instruction to the Government of Bengal, No. 104, dated 10 January 1865.
21. Letter No. 3987, dated 13 June 1865, from the Government of Bengal to the Government of India.
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