

**PRIMARY EDUCATION IN THE KHASI AND JAINTIA HILLS:
ITS SOCIO-CULTURAL ROOTS
AND
EARLY HISTORY**

By
E. Weston Dkhar



Youth behold before your face,
Know which way your steps to aim;
There's a Star your path to trace,
For living name and lasting fame.

1993

Khavi

**Published by:—
SEVENHUTS ENTERPRISE**

Shillong Super Market
Room No. 26, MAWKHAR,
SHILLONG-793002

NE
372.954
DKH;1

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

1993

Library 138578

Acc. No.

Acc. by *NS*

Date *29/10/93*

Class by *J. 12/10/93*

Sub Heading by

Author

Year published by

Laser Typesetting by:
Nutech Graphics
B-9/106, Pharma Appart. I.P. Ext. Delhi-92

Printed by
ROMIL PUBLISHERS (P) LTD.
201-A East Azad Nagar, Delhi-110051 at
Madhu Offset Press, Shashtra Delhi-110032

F 237
868

Dedicated

to

The Memory of my beloved

Teacher, the late Swami Suddhabodhananda,
Headmaster of the Ramakrishna Mission High School,
Cherrapunjee (1941-65) who dedicated his life for the
education of the Khasis, especially the less for-
tunate Khasis, the War People, residing in the
border of erstwhile East Pakistan (now
Bangladesh) and who bore the economic
brunts of the Partition of India.

Often I've walked through cloud darkened days
From the soft lap of Nature, I see as I gaze;
The days getting clearer, the stars brighter glow,
Though I'm weary and many a tear drops that flow;
The bird has escaped and he sings from the thorn,
Why should I weep now, from grief I've borne,
I'll seek everyday from the sweet rounddelays;
On the warm lap of Nature, through bright winter days.

CONTENTS

	Page
1. Preface	i-ii
2. Foreward	iii-vi
3. Introduction	1-16
4. Chapter I: The Khasis Around the Fireside	17-22
5. Chapter II: The Shellites	23-29
6. Chapter III: The Shella Confederacy	31-39
7. Chapter IV: The First Primary School at Shella	41-48
8. Chapter V: The Welsh Calvinistic Presbyterian Mission	49-71
9. Chapter VI: The Roman Catholic Mission	73-74
10. Chapter VII: The Hindu Mission and the Muslim Mission	75-77
11. Chapter VIII: The Seng Khasi Organisation	78-80
12. Chapter IX: The Ramakrishna Mission: Its Work in the United Khasi & Jaintia Hills	81-86
13. Chapter X: Basic Education	87-89
14. Chapter XI: U Soso Tham, The Great Teacher and The Poet Laureate.	91-101
15. Epilogue	103-106

FOREWORD

If history is not to be a tedious collection of dates, events and names, in other words, a mere catalogue that will be read by only the scholar and the proofreader; if history is to be an absorbing story of man's aspirations, struggles, successes, failures: in short, the very story of mankind, then it must be written by a poet or a poetic mind. History may repeat itself but it need not therefore be repetitive and tiresome. It should be readable like a novel. When we look at the histories written by scholars what do we find? The majority of their work will never be read and understood by the common men who themselves create history. Of course, there are enviable exceptions but they are exceptions. To read a Gibbon, a Durant, a Churchill, or a Jadunath Sarkar is an exciting experience. That is because they were basically poetic geniuses with insight and imagination. Their works are not repetitive but creative. I submit that history should be written by like minds. The best of all histories shall be written by poets themselves, making them enchanting, enlightening and elevating. For, after all, the duty of the historian is to interpret, and give new insights into the mind of man or that of the nation. When written by a poet, a most prosaic subject like Primary Education can turn into interesting reading, pleasurable and profitable.

This book has been written by a major poet, Mr. E. W. Dkhar whom I have known him over the years. He has been a true friend to me. Unassuming, soft-spoken Mr Dkhar has quietly carved himself a name as a major poet in the Khasi language. Mr Dkhar, the poet, writes here about Primary Education in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills: Its socio-cultural roots and early history. Simple, straightforward, imaginative and poetic is his style. The book is not a catalogue. At the same time dates and names do find their due place in it. The writer has adhered strictly to facts. Some of what he says may be controversial but that does not diminish the value of this work. I do hope that all who are interested in the Khasis and their culture will find here a real history, written almost like a story, by one of the best minds I have had the good fortune to come across.

S.M. Nayar
Headmaster,
Tirot Singh Memorial High
School, Mawkdok.

FOREWORD

It has been a rewarding experience to go through this book written by Mr. E.W. Dkhar. It is always gratifying to see when an author has taken pains to go into his subject thoroughly and put his thoughts down with an eye to detail.

This book is the result of careful research and has the additional advantage of containing comments on various aspects from people who have had a wide experience and knowledge of education in these hills.

I am sure the reader will be benefited by going through the book and while his views may differ from those of the writer's, I have little doubt that he will not fail to appreciate the honest approach to the subject that the author has shown. From experience, I can say that nothing written by Mr Dkhar can be dismissed as uninteresting.

I congratulate Mr Dkhar, on his valuable contribution to the history of education in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills. This, I am confident will provide interesting information to the lay reader as well as ample material for research students who wish to carry on study on a subject that is in itself vast and, as it should be, never-ending.

I.M. Simon

Head,

Khasi Department, North Eastern
Hills University, Shillong.

FOREWORD

I have with great pleasure gone through Mr. E. Weston Dkhar's manuscript entitled "**Primary Education in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills: Its Socio-cultural Roots and Early History**" which is seeing its light now.

Very few works on the history of education have come out. Mr Dkhar's effort to produce this work is, therefore, commendable. This book should be helpful to research scholars, teachers, students and readers interested in the field of educational reconstruction, towards imparting incentives in the various subjects – Arts, Humanities and Sciences and reshaping educational projects more constructively as should suit with the need of our times. The role of the educationists and reformers in fact is as profound and as constructive towards shaping our future destiny. The role of education towards bringing innovation to society is very vital since we are marching into the 21st Century very shortly. Mr Dkhar, if I were not incorrect, is seeking to provide the correct model to averting the fashions and ideologies injurious to our social climate.

I wish this venture a success towards stimulating the functional role of education properly and thoroughly in all the areas where it operates. It is again essential to remember that while we welcome this development of science and technology as the means to develop our economic system, we should be competent enough to see that the cultural grandeur and heritage by no means is obliterated.

I wish this book its success towards boosting higher accomplishments and ensuring our future progress and advancement in all spheres of the society.

Dr. Hamlet Bareh
Professor of Creative Arts & Continuing Education,
North Eastern Hills University,
Shillong.

FOREWORD

I am glad that this book of Mr. E Weston Dkhar "PRIMARY EDUCATION IN THE KHASI AND JAINTIA HILLS; ITS SOCIO-CULTURAL ROOTS AND EARLY HISTORY" has seen the light of the day after years of hardworks.

I hope that this book would find its way to all public and private libraries in every nook and corner of the world, for it contains and provides rich and interesting informations and materials for further exploration in the vast field of Education and knowledge.

S. Koressterwell Majaw
Adviser of Publication,
Sevenhuts Enterprise,
Shillong.

PREFACE

The year 1964 is memorable in as far as my writing is concerned for, in that year the Seng Jingtip, a literary and cultural organisation conducted an Open Essay Competition on the subject, "**The History of Primary Education in the United Khasi and Jaintia Hills District and Proposals for its Improvement**" in which my Essay won the coveted First Prize in the competition. This unexpected event in my career not only encouraged and inspired me but also lifted me and opened up new horizon in my intellectual pursuits, and prompted me to expend more energy to achieve the goal – a complete book on the subject. There had been no previous attempts in the field, and the topic offered scope for research and investigation. Being untouched and unexplored, it seemed very difficult to proceed, and readymade evidences were scanty. The general assumption was that the Welsh Calvinistic Presbyterian Mission was the first to educate and enlighten the Khasis, but recorded evidences available amply testify that prior to the advent of the Missionaries to the Hills, as early as 1823 Shella Village in the southernmost part of the district had already seen the light of education. The author had to take into confidence the records available in the state (Shella Confederacy) as well as the narrations of some authoritative persons who were still living at the time the author started the research work.

Particularly for the information about the Shella School, the author is deeply indebted to the late Mr B. Wellington of Nongwar Village, who was a contemporary of the late Rai Bahadur Dohory Ropmay, the late Kisor Swett, a renowned advocate of the time, the late Mr. Mohesh Swett, ex-Wahadadar of the Shella Confederacy, the late Rev. J.J.M. Nichols Roy, the late Mr. S.M. Roy Ropmay, the late Mr. Jokidhon Chyne, a politician and a great administrator in the Confederacy, and the late Thu Along of Mustoh Village; and from whom the author could collect the records of Rev. Timothy and Ksan Master, of the Shella School. Mr. B. Wellington was an expert in the science of genealogy of his people, who not only was a keeper of rare and antiquated records but a great store-house of information as well, since he was the Secretary of State (Shella Confederacy) for a long time. These records and information were of immense value which enable the author to dive deeper in his research work in the field.

The author deeply acknowledges his gratitude and thanks to the late S.M. Roy Ropmay of Mustoh Village, a renowned Headman through out his life,

well-versed in the personal law, culture and traditions of the people for the information he had rendered. The author is also very thankful to the late Iso Roy, ex-Wahadadar of the Shella Confederacy and to the late C.D. Khyllap, a politician and a social worker; for their valuable information on the administration and political institution of the people. The detailed information which they had given about the socio-economic, political and religious institution has greatly enriched and expanded the horizon of our knowledge of the past, and is also a source of inspiration and encouragement beyond measure.

At the same time the author expresses his thanks to Dr. Hamlet Bareh, Prof. of Creative Arts, NEHU, Mr. S.M. Nayar, ex-Headmaster and Secretary of the Ramakrishna Mission High School, Cherrapunjee, and Mr. I.M. Simon, Head of Khasi Department, NEHU; but for whose help and guidance the author would have found it extremely difficult to forge ahead and complete the work. The author is grateful to all his friends who have provided him with some rare records and documents either in Bengali, English or Khasi, for his undertaking a complete and successful research on the subject and beyond. Similarly, the author may mention the help he received from Mrs. Margurite Fairbrother, Missionary in the Church of Christ, for helping him in clarifying certain issues. Last but not the least, the author expresses his genuine and sincere gratitude to Rev. T.B. Philips, the late David Roy and the late Owen Rowie who as examiners and judges of the said Essay Competition rendered sound advice and guidance as well as encouragement which have immensely inspired the author to confidently wield his pen in the cause of Khasi literature.

The Author

Other Books by the Same Author

1. Ka Jitlakhai (Poetry) 1979
2. Ki Siejkhongpong etc. (Poetry) 1980
3. Na Kpep u Sohpetbetbneng (Poetry)
(State Literary Award Winner) 1980
4. Ka mamla (Poetry)
(State Literary Award Winner) 1981
5. Ka Panjira Ksiar (Poetry)
(State Literary Award Winner) 1992
6. Tang Ka Jinggainguh Thang (Poetry)
(State Literary Award Winner) 1984
7. Ki Khana Nongtymmen etc. (Prose) 1985

INTRODUCTION

The Shining stars that gleam with truth,
When all the land was bright with youth,
While knowledge still though fading fast,
Though Canst attained are gone at last,
Oh Diamond, oh Golden Pen;
Awake from sleep and shine again.

Then brightly shine, lead me to go—
Down where the silver rivers flow;
Beneath the trees that cast cool shade,
Alone I'll roam the forest glade—
To pool below from cascade's brow;
He whom we love where is he now?

Memories are fading fast and information might have been lost in the mist of obscurity if not gathered and collected in time. The present generation is revolving in doubt and uncertainty as to the time the Khasis began their history in which their culture and civilisation developed and acquired its present form. Did the genesis of their first settlement and inhabitation begin with the legends of "U *Sohpetbneng*"¹ and "U *Diengiei*"². When the Seven Huts descended from Heaven to grow and multiply in these fair and beautiful hills? Was it true that the Seven Huts had been isolated from the Nine Huts in heaven for disobeying God the Creator by hewing down the gigantic tree 'U *Diengiei*' from the mount *Diengiei*? Was it correct that since that time man was no longer able to reach God and heaven for his sinful act, and that the Golden Ladder from the Mount *Sohpetbneng* or the Navel of the Sky was cut off, the day U *Diengiei* fell down? Was this the correct and concrete proof of the genesis and settlement of the Khasis on these Hills? Or are these supernatural phenomena but legendary elements and backgrounds of their social and religious traditions? The answer to these queries and guesses is rather paradoxical: myste-

Sohpetbneng¹: A legendary mountain situated to the North-West of Shillong city. The Khasis of yore believed that the Peak was the Naval of the Sky or the centre of the earth. Legends and Mythologies atleast believe that the 'Seven Huts', the forefathers of the Khasis, descended from Heaven to settle down on these beautiful hills and dales by the Golden Ladder from this mountain and on this basic assumption the Khasi religion is believed to be enunciated.

rious and misleading for it will throw us completely into a world of mirage and imagination never able to quench our thirst for knowledge. For a safe sail to our destination we should be contented with whatever evidence and historical fragments available from the huts and cottages around the country.

“From out the huts, from out the nest,
From out the cots, though dark at best,
’Tis there that great thoughts are imbued,
Back there I turn in solitude”.

For an accurate and precise historical description of any people, authentic sources and archaeological evidences are to be relied on. Here again, we lost ourselves in the mists for, neither historical antiquities nor archaeological findings are available to penetrate into the darkness of time hovering mysteriously over it. But one thing stands out clear and unmistakable; according to anthropological reports and investigations, the Khasis are the descendants of that great Austro Asiatic stock, whom they believe to be one of the oldest human species to settle in India and South-East Asia. We humbly admit that we do not know anything about their grand exodus in their pre-nomadic stage, their settlement and activities. One thing that stands out prominently is that the first settlers in India were pushed further and further by later invaders like the Dravidians, the Aryans, the Huns and others to the remote corners and hilly

Diengiei²: A legendary tree that sprang up from the Mount Diengiei situated on the western side of the Shillong city. Mythology believes that in ancient times a tree of huge size and height grew from the top of this mountain and its spreading branches covered the whole earth so much so that sunrays could not penetrate to the ground. An Assembly of the people gathered together and decided to fall it down. But to their great surprise the wounds inflicted by daws and axes on the previous day were healed in the next morning. This surprised and baffled them. At last “*Ka Phreit*” a small bird like a sparrow, revealed the truth, on condition that they would allow her and her generations to eat freely the corn from their fields. The men agreed and made a solemn oath with her and the bird revealed that while they were fast asleep in their huts and cottages, a tiger came at dead of night and licked the wounds of the tree so that it was perfectly healed again in the morning. Listening to the warning of the bird, the children of the Seven Huts before leaving home in the evening, placed the blades of their daws and axes around the wounds of the tree. The tiger came at night as usual to lick the wounds, but this time the sharp blades wounded his tongue badly, which ultimately killed him. Then only that gigantic tree yielded and fell down. The children of the seven Huts were overjoyed at the grand achievement and celebrated a grand festival with pomp, dance and merriment at “*Ka Lympung Ri Lum*” or the ‘Dancing ground of the Hills’. Perhaps it was since that time that the Khasi cultural dance which we witness around the country today took its shape and form.

tracts of India. It is doubtly whether God Almighty placed the Seven Huts directly right from heaven, according to mythology, on these hills. In this connection, there is a close similarity in the mythological belief of the Vietnamese regarding their exodus and settlement. They believe that they came to Vietnam thousands of years ago in sixteen (16) boats from South-East China braving the storms and waves of the China Sea. Before they could land on Vietnamese soil a severe tempest arose and the occupants of the sixteen Boats had to struggle for survival. In the following turmoil and confusion, the Nine Boats landed safely, while the Seven Boats were separated and lost forever. Since that time the Nine Boats never met the Seven Boats again, but they firmly believe that the Seven Boats were in heaven amidst unspeakable happiness with God the Creator and the Nine Boats were ever longing to join them when life on earth ended. A similar belief is cherished by the Khasis. According to their version; in the beginning there were sixteen huts and somehow the Seven huts and the nine huts were cruelly separated. The story runs that while the Seven huts were descending to earth to plough and cultivate, the Golden Ladder from the Navel of the sky or Sohpetbneng Peak was cut off by the enemy of God. Since then the Nine Huts remained in heaven with God, while the Seven huts remained here on earth amidst hardships and sufferings and ever cherished the idea of meeting them when the sun of life set.

The people of Shella, the fathers of Khasi Democracy, the most enlightened section of the Khasi community and the pioneers of almost everything in the land, who had been roaming throughout the length and breadth of the country, have their own unique version to explain their exodus and settlement on these emerald hills. Their traditional version runs that they came to these hills as sixteen couples on sixteen Dikropakhia or "rock birds" generations ago, from the Indus Valley when Alexander the great invaded the country. Tired of fighting for unknown glory and unknown destiny, the sixteen soldiers stealthily took to flight on the back of the sixteen tamed Dikropakhia birds with their loved ones and flew to the unknown east to avoid being detected and caught by Alexander's spies. On their tiresome and weary journey they came to a beautiful country where a giant tree stood with its spreading branches reaching the clouds. That tree, the sixteen couples named 'U Diengiei meaning, a supernatural tree which is not found anywhere else under the sun. It was said that the Seven Couples were so greatly attracted by the beauty of the land and they decided to settle down there. But the other Nine Couples continued their journey, till before sunset they reached a beautiful country near a crystal clear river and they filled the place with lovely fields and orchards.

Shyllong : The word "Shyllong" (modern spelling 'Shillong') comes from the original Khasi word 'Shyllang' meaning 'The Forehead'. The Khasis of yore believed that the Sohpet-bneng Peak was the centre of the earth and Shyllong Peak, its forehead.

But the heavy rain and the cold winter affected the health of the Dikropakhia birds and all of them died. Since then the Seven Couples and the Nine Couples lost contact with one another. The Seven Couples prospered abundantly and multiplied in numbers to constitute the Khyntiam (Khasi Upland) clan and the Nine Couples, likewise, with the blessing of God, prospered and multiplied in numbers to constitute the Pnar or Synteng clan (Khasi East, who are inhabiting the Jaintia Hills). Some scholars are also of the opinion that the Khasis were a constituent of those Sixteen Tribes whose original home was somewhere in Kashmir. Due to the unwholesome climate, hard life and scarcity of food and pastures, the Seven Tribes migrated to the plains while the Nine Tribes still remained on the Mountains. Perhaps, this is the simple reason why the Khasis frequently use the expression— "*Seven below and Nine above*" in their prayers and sacrifices; to indicate that the Seven Tribes still remained on the Mountains. It seems that the Seven Tribes did not stay long in the plains as they were forced out of their homes and hearths by stronger and mightier warriors. Their stories indicate that they fled to the Himalayan Ranges and temporarily settled down somewhere in Nepal. The very name 'Kanchenjunga' to one of the peaks which to the Khasis means 'Ko Kynshreng jong nga' meaning "*proudly you stand before me unshaken!*" and the name 'Makashang' given to the Everest, which means 'incomparable and unconquerable' or 'Danger ahead', are convincing indications that they (Khasis) might have had settled down once at the foot of the Himalayas. For reasons unknown, at last, after crossing mighty rivers, thick and dense forests, ravines and mountains, fighting at every step, they ultimately migrated and permanently settled down on these lovely hills. It is no wonder then why our forefathers narrated '*the Twelve years' journey*' as a solemn and solid proof that it took them twelve complete years in their wanderings to journey from their original home to these emerald hills. However, till now no one knows exactly from where the Khasis came and how long had they been settled on these Hills. For precise and accurate information we leave it entirely to the anthropologists and the archaeologists to investigate.

Regarding the education of the people we have but one traditional version explaining why the ancient Khasis failed to possess a written literature. According to tradition, the Khasis had had a book or literature. While crossing the river to meet God for instruction in certain rites and duties, the man of the Plains or UDkhar (as the Khasis generally call him), tied the book on the crown of his head, while the Khasis swallowed it to preserve it in his belly and that was the simple reason why he did not have a written literature. This version has close resemblance and similarity to the traditional version of the Tribes of Rwong and Lisu inhabiting the North-Eastern part of Indo-Burma, adjacent to the Red Chinese, who had long been isolated from the rest of the world by mountain barriers and thick forests. In explaining why they failed to possess

a written literature, they too relate that long ago they had had in possession a book written on cow-hide; but it was eaten up by a hungry dog while an old man, the custodian, was drying it in the sun: and that explains why they failed to have any literature at all.

Some writers assume that this entire absence of literature clearly suggest a long period of isolation from more civilized races. The statement in all probability holds little truth: for, the Khasis since time immemorial had intermingled with other civilized races of India either through commercial activities or political contacts. The absence is absolutely due to the fact that the Khasis believed wholeheartedly that it was just the same thing for him to have the book in his belly as in his hand. Moreover, our forefathers had a peculiar belief that "*We Khasis are a special people : others must read to understand, while we have an infallible guidance from within.*" They went also to the extent that "*We Khasis need no education, as we have 'Swallowed' all knowledge.*" Here again, it reminds us of the story of that great scholar, Hiuen Tsang the "*Master of the Law*" - the law of Buddha, who journeyed a great deal throughout the length and breadth of India. It is narrated that in one of his journeys he met a man from South India who came to Karnasuvarna, and that man wore around his belly and waist copper plates, and on his head he carried a lighted torch. Staff in hand, with proud bearing and lofty steps, he wandered about in that strange attire. And when anyone asked the reason why he was in that curious get-up, he told him that his "Wisdom was so great that he was afraid his belly would burst if he did not wear copper plates around it." Most probably people in that distant age thought that knowledge and wisdom were accumulated not in the head but inside the belly.

That the Khasis possessed an infallible guidance from within or were a civilized people is clearly indicated in the abundance of traditions and folklores, fables and mythologies, manifesting their high philosophical thoughts, far-sightedness and lofty ideas and thinking capacity. Especially the interpretation of the Doctrine of Imputation is remarkable and unique in character. John Hughes Morris made the following narration :

It relates that God in the beginning used to come down to held council with man once every seven day to instruct him in his rites and duties even after the Golden Ladder from the Navel of the Sky or Sohpetbneng was cut off. God declared that on account of one man's sin many would have to suffer and die. But man pleaded earnestly saying, "Not so, my Lord, but let man die for his own sins and transgressions he commits." Nay, I will show thee that things are as I say." Then He commanded the man to sit down there awhile till He could show him something. By and by an ant crept on the man's foot and stung him. He looked around and saw the ant that had stung him. He got so angry that he commended to kill all the ants he could see. Just then God appeared to

him and questioned him, "Why do you kill these poor creatures?" "Because they bit me," replied the man. "But did all of them bite you?" enquired God. "No," replied the man, "only one." Then God said to him, "Did you remember what I told you? That for the sins of one, many will perish!" To confirm it further, God commanded the man to go to yonder forest to cut down a large tree. The man went as commanded. But before he hewed it down he had to cut many small trees to make space for cutting. And then the tree fell down. Many other small trees that grew around it were crushed to the ground. When God came and saw what had happened, he questioned him saying, "Did I not tell you to cut down only one trees?" Out of shame, the man answered, "But I could not cut the big tree without cutting and injuring the small ones first that stood around." Then God said, "Remember thou rightly and exactly what I say unto thee: for one's man sins, many shall fall and perish." That is why the Khasis believe that for the sins and transgressions of one member of the clan, the whole clan will suffer. Therefore, when any sacrifice of the clan is done each member of the clan should do his allotted part, otherwise the whole offering is void, and they also believe that a calamity of great proportion will befall the entire clan.

The Khasis had a noble creative power, he was an imaginative and a natural philosopher. His theories about the creation of the earth and everything that are there in it are interesting. How God used to hold council with man once every seven day: how the Tempter tempted man into sin and wickedness, disobedience and iniquity, why the crow is black because of sly wickedness and corruption, why the cow does not have teeth in the upper jaw, why scorpions, snakes and centipedes are in great enmity with thunder, why the cock is offered in sacrifice and why it crows thrice before daybreak, why the sun and the moon never meet and why they are periodically subjected to eclipse: all these are high testimonies to his wonderful and unique power of imagination. Although most of them hold no scientific value or truth, they yet throw a flood of light on his intellectual capacity and sublime conceptual power. Especially, the theory of how God created man is very interesting. It is a belief that has become rooted in the minds of the Khasis that in the beginning, God, the Creator, made their ancestors, the Sixteen Couples, and placed them in heaven. With His grace they grew and multiplied in numbers to constitute the Sixteen Households. How God created them is yet another interesting story. It relates that God, after creating the beautiful earth, thought of replenishing it with a creature who would be above other creatures and who would represent His own form and image. According to this version, God moulded from clay the first couple in His own form and image and baked them in a kiln-like furnace. As He had other works to attend to, He forgot the pair in the fire and they were badly burnt. Thus the first Negro couple came into being. Shocked by the first experience, He put another couple of clay inside the furnace and quickly took them out while the

clay was still unbaked. This time the white man's ancestors came into existence. Upset with the two experiences, He carefully placed inside the kiln yet another couple of clay. But this time too it was half baked and out came a Chinese couple with yellow skin. Yet another couple of clay He put inside the fire as he failed to possess the right couple with the right colour. But this time it was a bit over baked, and the colour was not right in His sight. This time U Dkhar Couple (the ancestors of the people of the plains with dark complexion) came into being.

The mistakes He committed previously made Him more careful the next time. Carefully and thoughtfully He placed another couple of clay in the fire. This time the clay was perfectly baked and the colour was just right in His sight, a beautiful golden brown. Out of joy He placed fifteen other clay couples in the fire and all of them turned out perfectly beautiful in the sight of the Lord: light brownish yellowish, exactly the colour that God wanted. Thus the first Khasi couples came into existence. With great joy He placed them in Heaven with Him while the other couples He scattered around the earth to fill and replenish it. In jubilation and happiness the Sixteen Couples lived in heaven. They knew no pain, no sorrow, no suffering, no death, no hunger and no thirst. Well pleased with the sixteen, God made a Golden Ladder from heaven which stuck on the Sohpetbneng Peak or the Navel of the sky. By this Ladder the Sixteen households descended to the earth and ascended to heaven. They made beautiful gardens of orchards in and around the mountain till Doom's Day when the Golden Ladder was cut down by the enemy of God while the Seven Huts were still on earth in their gardens of orchards. Since that time the Seven Huts or the Seven Households remained in these beautiful hills and became our ancestors while the Nine Huts or the Nine Households remained forever in heaven in everlasting joy with God.

Here again we discover that the religious concept of the Khasis, particularly, in the theory of creation, is completely different from that of Hinduism which promulgates the idea that a woman is but a mistake of God, as revealed in the Puranas or the concept of Judaism where the first woman, Eve, was created out of Adam's rib as mentioned in the book of Genesis, and that too after God identified the loneliness in him (Adam). To the Khasis God is perfect in His divine performance. He rightly established that in the beginning God created men and women (not a man and a woman, but couples). Man alone, according to Khasi belief, is incomplete without a woman, defeating the very purpose of creation. Thus, the subtle concept of sex inferiority or superiority as manifested in other religions is wholly absent. Most of the religious scriptures of the world enunciate the idea that a woman has no religion and her husband is the redeemer both physically and spiritually, excepting in Christianity. To the Khasis the concept of all religious ceremonies is incomplete

without a woman, since she is as religious as man, sharing equal responsibility in every religious rite. Even her place in the other world (heaven) is not the same to that of her husband as she had to occupy a separate place with her own Grand-Pa and Grand-Ma. Therefore, social equality of both sexes is firmly established in the Khasi soil centuries before other so call civilized people of the world could hardly visualize it. Since the society is completely free of inequality of sexes, there is no need to propagate the sore doctrine of 'Women's emancipation' which is the chronic social evil of the modern civilized world or of 'Dowry' which they consider a hideous crime against the divine covenant. Khasi society has been liberated of these evils since the dawn of history, while the so-called civilized world today is still groaning painfully under its heels. And because the Khasi society practices the matrilineal system, some writers misread the social realities thereon, branded it as 'The land where women reign', projecting a distorting and baseless picture which does not exist among the Khasis.

The main reason why God created the Sixteen Couples was because He was so much overjoyed at His achievement to have couples of perfect skin, colour and structure, and the Khasis believe that they are a special people with a special purpose. Furthermore, the ancient Khasis thought that it was an abominable sin to get married among the children of the same ancestors. Therefore, when the Seven Huts were separated there was inter-marriages among the Seven Huts to constitute the Khasi Race. It is believed that because the Khasis do not marry among members of the same ancestors we are free from, maimed, deformed, blind, deaf and lame children which they believed do exist in plenty in the realm of the Devil.

How far this legendary belief is significant we do not know and we may add that is beyond our purview. Furthermore, many Khasi scholars and writers widely differ in their opinions whether the Seven Huts descended to earth from the Sohpetbneng Peak or from the Diengiei Peak where, they believed, a gigantic tree grew up and its branches covered the whole earth while its top touched heaven, so that the seven Huts and the Nine Huts could easily descend and ascend through its branches. But modern thinkers believe that the Golden Ladder was probably the Divine Covenant between Man and God and the "Diengiei Tree" stood for sin and unrighteousness. When the Divine Covenant was broken by sin, God separated Himself and His separation was by itself a spiritual gloom and a mental darkness and the whole earth seemed fruitless and barren. But to be safe let us not build our castles with the bricks and mortar of legends or mythologies or religious beliefs but with facts and realities which we can still gather from historical evidences available from the huts and cottages around the land.

One fact stands out clear and eminent: our forefathers came to these hills after crossing rivers on their migration. As they braved the mighty currents of these rivers they might have lost everything to save their lives and those of their dear and near ones. We do not know what mighty rivers they crossed on their way or whether their habitation had been cruelly destroyed by mighty floods that they had to flee for safety. Or, were they being brutally driven away from their homes and hearths by mighty warriors? These questions may provoke the researcher and the anthropologist for a solution. One thing is undeniable : those days were days of horror, of fighting for survival, either to conquer or to be vanquished. Thus, in their wanderings in search of a safe and permanent home they had to fight wars, plagues, pestilence and they suffered untold hardships. It was probable that although they might have been a civilized people, the Khasis lost everything in their grand exodus. According to the latest findings, the Khasis belong to that great family of people – the Austro-Asiatic stock, one of the oldest human species believed to have settled in India thousands of years ago. But continuous fighting and tedious wanderings might have scattered their whole civilization to the winds. There are many examples in the history of the world of many civilizations in the past being pulled down and scattered to the winds by barbaric fighting, and new civilizations had to be built right from the start. One of the sad reasons why the Khasis did not possess a written literature is most probably because it took them a long time to settle down. Therefore, it is very wrong to condemn the Khasis as uncultured and uncivilized merely because they had no written literature.

When foreigners and some Indian friends called them '*troublesome marauders: savage and cruel*', it was because they were fierce fighters, stout defenders, freedom lovers, possessing an unfettered love of liberty, indomitable and stubborn, ready to give up their lives in defence of their dear motherland. The Khasis from time immemorial were a great people: rather, they ruled and conquered people of other tribes and races, particularly those who inhabited the plains of the Assam and the Surma Valley. The very word '*dkhar*' comes from the word '*dokhol*' which means '*conquered subjects*' or '*this land belongs to me by virtue of rights of occupation and conquest.*' There had been no single historical evidence to prove that at one time or the other the Khasi land had been conquered and subjugated by any foreign invader till the middle of the Ninetieth Century when the British East India company invaded and conquered the land.

There was no slavery in the Hills, and only those conquered subjects known as '*Ki khun ki raiot*' or subjects, were turned into slaves; and thus runs the Khasi imitative – '*U Mraw - u dkhar*' meaning, '*only the plains men are slaves ! But to the Khasis the concept of slavery is not akin to that of the Greeks*

and the Romans that a maiden could bathe naked in front of a slave who was not considered to be a human being. The Khasis were a god-fearing people who treated the conquered subjects with respect and compassion. Thus, selling and buying of slaves was totally prohibited. Even the slave had the right to appeal to the authority if the master was inhuman.

Documents and maps indicate that the Khasi territory once extended to the Brahmaputra to the North and the greater part of the Surma Valley to the South. Kamakhya hills, where the Kamakhya temple stands, was known to the Khasis as 'U Lum ka Meikha' or '*The Grand Aunt's Hillock*' (to mark the boundary) and many of the towns in the Kamrup District, Nowgong District and Sylhet District like Kiew-hati (modern spelling Gauhati or Guwahati) meaning, "*to ride on the elephant*"; or "*to begin the journey by riding on elephant* : Bordwar, Padwa, Jaintiapur, Shati (Chuttack), Shella-bari (Sylhet) and others were once the principal towns of the Khasis or their chief trading centres. The Lake Shati where the town of Chuttack stands belonged to Ka Shati, the wife of U Khang of Mustoh village, the founder of that village sixteen generations from hence.

The British, despite their superior and well-trained army, would have failed miserably if there were no treachery and conspiracy, betrayal and disunity. This caused humiliation, defeat and slavery. It was, it is, and it shall be true. History is an over-flowing stream of events. The past, the present and the future are intertwined and inter-related. Under the same circumstances, the same effects will be produced. This is the supreme Law of Nature. But man, however clever he might be, never learns from history. The Khasis since time immemorial were loyal subjects having a high sense of civic duty and political consciousness. These attributes are but the qualities of a civilised and cultured people.

The history of pre-British regime depicted clumsily by many authors and reporters as 'The dark age' holds little truth. What had ruined them most was disunity and mutual jealousy. The Khasis had for a long long time acquainted themselves with the knowledge of many different branches of arts and sciences. with the handicap of not knowing about the art of writing and reading they yet marvellously advanced in the science of astronomy, medicine and metallurgy. Regarding astronomy, the Khasis of yore created a number of interesting stories about the stars and heavenly bodies like the sun and the moon. The story of the Sun and Moon and their subjugation to periodical eclipses, is one of the most interesting, Naming of some stars was also attempted at, for example, U Lur Mangkara - Pole Star, U Lur Step - Morning star, U Luridhuma - Comet, U Lur Ruhsyiar - The Great Bear, Ka Lynti Phan - Milky Way, U- Lur Tynriew - Little - Bear etc. Sometimes they forecast the weather with the help of some stars as their barometer. In the field of medicine they discovered many wild

herbs and natural substances which cured many kind of diseases. Besides, they knew the art of weaving and spinning, and the art of erecting monuments, monoliths, memorial stones and cromelechs.

Since time immemorial the Khasis were highly advanced in monographic literature. One can witness the monographic pictures on the rock at Dainthlen Falls where the Khasis are believed to have killed a huge demoniac python long time ago which had created a great havoc in the history of the Khasi race. At the Durbar (Assembly) at Synrang Jyrteh, believed to be the meeting place of many nations and nationalities, it was decided to cut the python into pieces and each one would eat his allotted share of the python's flesh so that the creature instantly died according to an oracle. To celebrate the victory they carved on the rock pictures of that grand occasion, which remains intact even today.

Again we can witness at Shella the astonishing picture on the rock of a rat hotly chasing a butterfly, which is known down to these days as '*U Khnai*' or '*The Rat*'. It was said that Rama and Lakshmana engraved that picture to tell the people that they came there in search of Rama's beloved wife, Sita, who had been cruelly stolen away by 'UDusmon' or the evil Ravana; that they came not to conquer their land and habitation. Such monographic inscriptions are available at different places around the country. The most important ones are at Syndai where the picture of an earthquake was engraved, to tell the later generations of the havoc and devastation created by that earthquake. Recently, Dr. Hamlet Barih brought a stone from Raitong village on which words and pictures had been engraved. These are a few irrefutable proofs that the Khasis were not an uncivilised people, and that the British were not the first to educate and civilise them. On the other hand, the Khasi civilisation had been completely uprooted by the advent of the British and their different system of education.

History reveals that, years before the arrival of the British on these hills, the Khasis were an important people in the Eastern Region of India particularly in iron smelting, gold and silver smelting, and in the making of brass vessels. The whole country is rich in minerals. Iron mining and industry greatly flourished in the principal centres of Synrang Jyrteh, Myriaw, Patharkhang, Nartiang, Mylliem, Nongkrem and many other less important centres. Synrang Jyrteh was among the most important centres, which was nicknamed '*The town of Blacksmiths*' and it was there that the legends '*Ka Nohkalikai*' or the '*Fall of Ka Likai*' and '*U Thlen*' (the python) came into existence. Khasi steel and iron goods were of superior quality, having great commercial demand and an extensive market in Assam and Bengal. It is well recorded that iron mining and steel industry in particular, began in the hills dating back to the year 1595 when U Syntiew Syiem reigned over Nongkhlaw.

It was he who opened a gateway between Nongkhlaw State and the Plains of Sylhet through Tharia (Bholagonj). The industry well flourished at the historical place of Synrang Jyrteh, there, under the Syiem of Mawtap or the Syiem of the Sixteen Principalities, situated to the west of Mawmluh town. At that time Mawmluh village was non-existent. It is historically proved that the village sprang up as a colony of labourers in later years, employed by traders and merchants either to work in the mines or for carrying pig iron to Tharia Bazaar or to Nongkhlaw for exporting to Assam. Syntiew Syiem diplomatically colonised Mawmluh and built a strong and impregnable fort there with the main objective of making it a centre of trade and commerce between the Hills and the Plains. When Khongthoh Syiem ascended the throne after the death of U Syntiew Syiem, in the year 1628, trade and commerce between Synrang Jyrteh and Chuttack was in full swing and it smoothly continued during the days of U Laitlyngka who succeeded after him till the days of U Konrai Syiem (1800-1814). Even the British testified that upto the year 1818 iron and steel figured prominently as the main export of the people of Mawmluh to the Plains of Sylhet. The agreement between the two parties was that the people of Mawmluh would continue to supply superior quality of pig iron and in return the merchants of Sylhet would pay higher price for it. It was during the year 1812 that commercial trouble cropped up. The merchants of Sylhet refused to stick to the contract since they had detected that inferior quality had been mixed and adulterated in the supply. Such action would certainly jeopardise the whole economy of the people who had long depended on this trade.

Therefore, U Hain Sing, the Syiem Khyannah or Prince who acted as a Governor, and the Durbar unanimously decided to institute an enquiry commission to find out the facts and punish the culprit in accordance with the law of the land. Fortunately or unfortunately the truth was soon revealed and the culprit was apprehended. The Syiem Khyannah, U Hain Sing, was caught unawares when he came to learn that the culprit was no other than his own brother-in-law. The people and the Durbar, together with the Myntri (Ministers) demanded full justice. U Hain Sing, finding himself in a dilemma, tried to shield his brother-in-law and cunningly refused to oblige to the demand of justice. Such an action (which was unprecedented) infuriated the people and ultimately dragged the two parties into a civil war. U Hain Sing and his supporters drove the Myntri and their supporters out of the town. When the sad news reached Nongkhlaw (the Headquarters), U Konrai Sing Syiem hurriedly arrived at Mawmluh to pacify the parties and to restore peace and order through amicable settlement. But U Hain Sing was too proud and publicly insulted U Konrai Sing Syiem. U Konrai Syiem could not swallow the insult. He called upon the ministers and their supporters (who were on the side of justice) to rally together and fight to the end till justice was restored. War was declared against

U Hain Sing and the combined armies surrounded the town, cutting all supplies and communications. U Hain Sing and his followers, who were fighting from inside the fort, were hardpressed and provisions were running down. He found no other alternative, either to fight to the last or to be starved to death within the fort of the town. At long last they decided to attack one of the allies forts—the Mawshamok Fort and escape to the South. The plan was almost successful but the supporters of U Konrai Syiem (the allied forces) foiled it. They hotly chased them to the South and overtook them at the slope of the Mawshamok hill. When U Hain Sing saw the imminent danger, he was compelled to sue for peace. U Konrai Syiem who was kind and noble-hearted, pardoned them and accepted their surrender.

In the Durbar at Mawhat (Pynter) in the year 1814 which was summoned by U Konrai Syiem, U Hain Sing and his followers in the presence of all representatives of neighbouring localities attended. U Konrai Syiem declared a general amnesty to all the rebels with goodwill and requested to their return to Mawmluh. But U Hain Sing and his followers were contended to stay at Pynter (later known as Laitkynsew) which literally '*means narrowly escaped like a bitch*'. That Battle is known to this day as the '*Battle of the Fort*' or ka '*Ma Mawkhyrdop*'. When peace was concluded trade and commerce was revived with the Plains of Sylhet; and it continued smoothly and prosperously till the Nongkhlaw Massacre in 1829. But it is regrettable that at the appearance of British metal goods in the market, the Khasi iron and steel industry slowly and gradually collapsed as they could not compete with the cheap and superior quality of English metal goods.

Nongkesh and Nongumlong towns specialised in gold and silver smelting and jewellery, and they were well known all over the country as the '*Towns of goldsmiths and jewellers*'. The Khasi Industries were not the only victims of the British Industries, due to the latter's superiority and low cost, but many of the Indian industries, especially the silk and cotton textile industries. Around the country we could witness with heart-break the ruins of these furnaces particularly at Synrang Jyrteh and the Dainthlen sites, which remind us of the greatness and the wisdom of our forefathers even in that distant past, challenging the present generation which prides itself abler and wiser. Besides, they manufactured agricultural tools and instruments like daws, jumpers, spades, knives and some carpentry and masonry tools like chisel, hammer, nail-puller and many others. They also manufactured guns and gun powder and many weapons of warfare.

Indeed, the Khasis were not savages and the British were not the first to train and civilise them: rather, their civilisation had long flourished and developed. From a glimpse of the administration and the existing governing institutions, the whole country embraced a high form of monarchical democ-

racy since the dawn of history. This form of government was not an incipient one but aged, old and stereotyped on Khasi-Jaintia Hills' soil while the country all around was surrounded by dictatorial monarchs who governed by the power of 'absolutism' and 'divine right theory'. A British observer witnessed a full Khasi Durbar (Assembly) at Nongkhlaw on the eve of the 'Nongkhlaw Massacre' and left the following imprint of appreciation: "I was struck with astonishment at the order and the decorum which characterized these debates.....I have often witnessed the debates in St. Stephen's Chapel but these of Gossya (Khasi) parliament appeared to me to be conducted with more dignity of manners" (Memoirs of David Scott). But, indeed, it was a great national insult and disgrace that when the same military general found himself unable to subdue them after four years of hard contested battles called them 'Blood thirsty savages'. "The evil that men do lives after them, the good is oft interred with their bones"—(Shakespeare) and history shall be the final judge. When the British (in the Privy Council) insulted the Congress Leaders saying, "You Indians...want home rule or home ruin!" Subhas Chandra Bose forcefully and firmly reacted to the remark and replied, "If you want to know the real meaning of democracy go to the hills of Assam. There you will find the Khasi State....." Thus, the Khasis had a high sense of socio-political organisation and established a citadel of culture in the Hills.

Swami Vivekananda well summarised, "Education is the manifestation of the perfection that is already in man." We are aware that our predecessors had no literature, and does not deserve the stigma and the language used by the foreigners and some of our Indian friends, in respect to their lives, manners and culture. The deepest meaning of the term 'education' reveals and reflects the growth of one's personality, one's physical, mental and spiritual faculties. Judged in this light, our forefathers were highly cultured, enlightened and farsighted, and their moral conduct and thinking capacity were admirable.

Existing customary laws and traditions in the country were of high standards, and the people respected them with a sense of compulsion or taboo. To break or disobey one of them was an offence of great consequence disliked by God and man alike or '*Ka sang ka ma*'. The Syiem was but a symbol of unity and possessed no absolute authority. All the powers of the state — Legislative, Executive and Judiciary rested on '*Ka Durbar blei*' or the

Syiem : The head of the Khasi (upland) states who was popularly elected by the Myntri (Ministers) and the Bakhrav (nobles) of the state from a particular clan. As the head of the State he is guided by the Bakhrav and the Durbar in all respects of the administration. He does not possess the power of absolutism nor the Divine right. The Syiem is not a Raja who subjugated to a King or Emperor, neither is he the King, who is over-all, but a traditional as well as a constitutional figure-head with hereditary rights.

'*Assembly of the people*'. The Syiem could not declare war, conclude treaty or form an alliance with any Syiem without the prior consent and sanction of the Assembly. The Syiem administered the day-to-day administration of the country with the advice of the Myntri or the Ministers chosen by the people and representing different clans.

All the rules and regulations were passed by the Assembly of the people. To disregard or disrespect them, or break one of them was an actus-reus inviting painful penalty. The code of Laws and criminal procedure were light and enlightened. Any law breaker or criminal should, before the Court of Justice, be convicted with prima-facie evidences of his mens-rea, and prosecution followed to determine the crime committed; and justice was in full swing. When the Syiem and the '*Durbar blei*' failed to pronounce a verdict on any case involving two parties, the only acceptable procedure was to have '*Ka Bishar blei*' or judgement by the gods either by '*Ka ngam-um*' or a dive in a river, or '*Ka bamsmai*' or swearing an honest oath. The one who swore falsely was left entirely to the vengeance and retribution of the gods and the ancestors. Sometimes the Syiem and the Durbar blei in a few and complicated cases, when the parties agreed, sanctioned a duel to decide their fate, as in the case of the Mawdkhap and the Lyngwa, in the history of Cherrapunjee Judiciary.

As far as was recorded, people committed few crimes, and they scarcely went to Court. The multiplication of crimes and criminal offences of to-day were totally unknown then, and they were the products of the British regime, due to cosmopolitan settlement. Before the '*Great Defeat*' or war of independence of 1829-39, the Khasis were entirely (excluded) from the rest of the world and cosmopolitan settlement. People of other races and nationalities have created our hills a '*seething cauldron of iniquity of sin and blasphemy*' that eats into our people. The only common crimes in the history of the people were murder for sacrifice to the blood-thirsty demon, the god of mammon, U Thlen, and "*Ka ai-ksuid*" or making people fall ill by the power of evil spirits. The penalty for the formal crime, if proved beyond reasonable doubt, was death, and the latter crime was penalised either by throwing the criminal into a ravine or deep inescapable hole till death, as in the case of U Phankon in the history of the people of Nongwar Village, or by sending the criminal into exile or "*Khi-lai-nuid*". Rape and theft were totally unknown. It was said that these particular crimes originated in the Khasi soil only at time of David Scott (1829-39) when the East India Company's army was stationed at Nongkhlaw. The foreigners took advantage of the free movement of our women, as it has happened today in the history of the Naga people, which brought about a disastrous war killing hundreds and thousands of innocent and peace loving people.

Touching certain social evils like prostitution in these Hills, we safely conclude that it is of recent origin during the Second World War, created by the British (yet who pride themselves to be civilised) to satisfy the lust of the British and the American soldiers. It was a customary law long prevailing in the land, although wars were won or lost, that the victors were strictly prohibited to employ women for immoral purposes and they considered it to be against the Law of Nature and that of God. Marriage, was to the Khasis '*a divinely ordained institution*' while prostitution was looked down on as the most evil practice having its existence only in the realm of demons and evil spirits. Much have we learned from the foreigners, and much have they plundered and corrupted our society. These evils, today, are the mental and social chronic diseases of the society and the people that need reformation and social re-adjustment. Our forefathers were patrons of culture, customs and traditions, and religion. The solemn and sacred duty of the present generation is to preserve the legacies of the past and to pass them on to our future generations as our heritage. The sole aim of education is to retain the beauty of the past, and to demolish and uproot the existing evils in society. "Finally..... whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things" (St. Paul).

EPILOGUE

It is said that time is the mighty hand that rocks the eternal cradle of progress and nurses struggling humanity through that period when man needs protection against his own ignorance. Therefore, the only weapon in the crusade against this evil is education. Knowledge is power, a power beyond estimation. An ancient wiseman said, "No Government can tax you for it. It is weightless when you travel with it. It increases as you spend out of it. That's knowledge. See the magic of it. No wealth can be greater than it. Learning is the best earning you have." Prof Kotharia well remarked, "Knowledge is vitally important, but if it is to transform society from a state of relative stagnation to one of dynamism and progress, there must be a general willingness and determination to make use of it in the service of the community."

If we take a glance at the condition of our hills and at the history of our people just a few hundred years ago, we would sadly lament at the depraved situation. Illiteracy, ignorance and superstitions; and especially the rural masses being carried away by prejudices and whims, various fantastic and dead habits which are harmful to the very national growth and prosperity. Education has undoubtedly reconstructed a new mind and a new national outlook in the people and has instilled in them confidence in the future of life's possibilities.

"Better be unborn than untaught, for ignorance is the root of all misfortunes," is an emphatic expression, proceeding forth from the deep well of truth. By measuring the weight of this expression only, we can comprehend and understand what advantages education has surely provided to man. Alfred Tennyson, the poet, spontaneously sings,—

To follow knowledge, like a sinking star,
Beyond the utmost bound of human thought.

How deeply and sincerely the poet sings! It is not for gold nor for silver, neither for wealth nor happiness, nor for material prosperity, but for knowledge itself irrespective of any material gain. Education is not merely an accumulation of knowledge nor a mere race for better standards, but it is a preparation for the whole meaningful task of life. The world and its history is slowly and gradually changing, thriving with new hopes and fears: many are the complexities and complications of education, and yet its contributions to man are marvellous. It is an undeniable fact that what we reap today are the magical products of education which has completely changed the face of our country and of our people.

When the Welsh Calvinistic Presbyterian missionaries first came to these Hills, they were totally upset at the condition of the country. They found out that the Shella Confederacy was the only pocket where it could be said that education and enlightenment was present to a certain degree, while the rest of the country was still educationally backward. Cunningly they utilised them for their own gains and purposes, keeping them on good terms and in esteemed positions, and through them propagating their ideas for the ultimate achievement of their goal and objectives. Likewise, in the political realm and territorial achievement, the British agents employed their services as clerks and interpreters for the interest of the Company.

The great task that confronted the missionaries in the Hills, was not, as termed, confrontation with heathendom or overcoming antagonists in the spread of Christianity, but untutored multitudes which called for utmost devotion and sacrifice in the field of education and within a short span of time they were able to completely change the face of the country and the outlook of the people. Had it not been for their untiring effort, the history of the Hills and the people would have been written in a different tune altogether. Education brought about tremendous changes which ultimately paved the way for modernisation and progress which the Hills had never witnessed before. Critics might have painted different pictures in this respect, but history with leniency has testified to the face of changes, the great handiwork of education, a truth which remain undisturbed and unchallenged.

It is undeniable that the sweetest rose is not that which has fewer thorns: so it is with education, for the whole structure is subjected to countless criticism culminating in its degradation, low quality and lower standards. To borrow from Rabindranath Tagore, "Ours is an education of cage. We are being trained, like apes, to imitate the vulgar habits of a vulgar age. Detached completely from the main purpose of our life, we have been taught to put up a mimic appearance. Our education has no aim, nor does it incorporate any spiritual or ethical contribution to the greatness of humanity." To conclude with Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya's words, "...purpose-less, moral-less, unprincipled and baseless."

If education is the chief corner stone of a just society designed as a means to raise humanity from the mud, squalor and back breaking toil. Primary Education is the background and Primary teachers are the first builders and architects of the Nation. But it is woefully regretted that they happen to be the most unfortunate section of the community, subjected to the most inhuman injustice with an honourable task upon their shoulders – nation building and moulding of future generations. If society demands quality of standards, society has a sacred duty to perform – to replace and set right their lost leadership which they once enjoyed. Then only can we attract the best

individuals to the profession who could honestly and sincerely carry on the task of nation building.

Society should bear in mind the gift the teachers offer to it. Doctors cure our diseases because the teachers of Medicine teach them the science of healing; politicians run and control the government because teachers of political science teach them the art of politics and government; administrators administer because teachers of public administration teach them the art of administration; a writer writes and a singer sings because the teachers teach them how to write and how to sing; advocates plead and argue the law because teachers of Law teach them the art to plead and argue; preachers preach sermons and expound doctrines because teachers of Theology teach them the Scriptures and the art to preach; engineers build bridges, roads and everything else because teachers teach them engineering. In fact, if there is no teacher we would be all living in jungles like animals. Therefore, it is the teacher who gives us everything that is good. Undoubtedly, it is illogical and unethical as well as morally unsound to grade education as '*unproductive investment*'. Our planners well remarked, "Education is the most important single factor in achieving rapid economic development and technological progress and in creating a social order founded in the value of freedom, social justice and equal opportunities." No doubt, the political system in the country determines its economic policies and goals, but education determines the political ideas and subsequent institutions.

In conclusion, education without a specific moral and ethical background is a social malady. It is fine and honourable to possess the spirit and the quality of Tennyson's Ulysses, "To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield," provided the moral value be kept intact. Therefore, we pray that its foundation be laid in truth and righteousness, that beauty and reverence may be built into its walls, and that as long as one stone remains upon another, it may stand for all things that are pure and lovely and of good reputation. The poet, in all his sincerity sings—

We read in papers and hear on the air,
Of killing and stealing, and crime everywhere;
We sigh and we say as we notice the trend,
'This young generation, where will it end?'
But can we be sure that it is their fault alone—
That may be a part of it isn't our own?
Are we less guilty to place on their way,
Too many things to lead them astray?
Too much money to spend, too much idle time,
Too many movies of passion and crime,

Too many books not fit to be read,
 Too many words better unsaid,
 Kids don't make the movies, they don't write the books,
 That paint gay pictures of gangsters and crooks.
 They don't make the liquor, they don't run the bars;
 They don't make the laws, they don't buy the cars;
 They don't peddle the drugs that addle the brain,
 That's all done by older folks, greedy for gain.
 'Delinquent teen-agers?' Oh how we condemn.
 The sin of the nation and blame it to them.
 For in so many cases it's sad, but it's true—
 The title 'delinquent' fits older folks too.

The ultimate goal of education is to produce not only scholarship but strong and dynamic character. Learners are to be equipped with the knowledge that will enable them to take up the responsibility of moulding the social, political and economic destiny of the country. We cannot afford to ignore the fact that discipline is the basic foundation of character, and education is the fountain from which discipline flows. It therefore calls for a complete and total reform on the part of the educationists both moral and intellectual for, scholarship alone as a categorical qualification of a teacher is totally outdated and baseless. We have, therefore, to search our hearts and find out how our society has always been moulding and shaped so as to extoll qualities of self-control and discipline and pragmatic virtues, virtues which in their turn shall shape our society into something noble and beautiful and of which even a Plato might be proud.



...MU Library 138578
 Acc. No
 Acc. by
 Date 29/10/94
 Class by
 Sub Heading by
 Searched by
 Indexed by
 Described by