

CHAPTER - FOUR

ROLE OF CHRISTIAN MISSIONARIES IN THE FIELD OF EDUCATION

4.1 Arrival of Missionaries in India

In the first chapter it has been mentioned that there were three agencies who contributed in the introduction of western education in India that is, the British East India Company, the native Indians and finally the Christian missionaries. Ever since the creation of the British East India Company in England the missionaries were attracted to India for its prospects for the propagation of the Gospel but the company was just a trading concern, so, it used to permit and occasionally encouraged the missionary activities in their areas. Between the years 1600 to 1765, the East India Company was primarily commercial concern. So they did not take any proper steps for the education of the Indian people. In these years also the company was engaged in fostering some proselytizing and education activities within its possessions and in the early year of 1614, steps were taken for the recruitment of Indians for the propagation of the Gospel among their countrymen and also imparting to these missionaries such education, at the expenses of Company, as would enable them to carry out effectively the purposes for which they were enlisted. It is also recorded that an Indian youth Peter, christened by King James I and he has also taken to England for education in Christian doctrine. In 1659, the Court of Directors showed some positivity to Christian missionaries by explicitly stating that it was their earnest desire by all possible means to spread Christianity among the people of India and also allowed missionaries embark on their ships. This evangelical zeal found support in contemporary England where the Church was experiencing the revival of a deep

religious fervour so that, when the Charter of the Company was renewed in 1698, the famous *missionary clause* was inserted in it by parliament.¹ And the Clause also directed the Company to maintain ministers of religion at their factories in India and also to take a Chaplain in every ship of 500 tons or more.

Side by side with the educational activities conducted by the company, a numbers of other educational activities were also organized by missionaries under the shadow of political authority. These institutions were of great significance on the history modern Indian education as a pioneer of private enterprise in education and also deserved detailed notice. One question also always struck that why the missionaries undertook educational activities as an integral part of their work in India. The very first objectives of the missionaries was to convert native Indians to Christianity and one could not expect them to start educational institutions or to work as teacher. There was a time in the early missionary history when the Home Authorities of missions refused to support educational institutions and also opined that the priests had no business to found schools but practical experience of the early missionaries soon convinced them that they had to start schools as an important means of proselytization. J.P Naik and Syed Nurullah, in their work, *A students' History of Education in India 1800-1973* laid a quote of Rev. Dr. D. O. Allen an eminent missionary of American Board, "in commencing their operations, missionaries have generally seen the propriety and importance of establishing schools. One reason for them is to educate the minds of the people, so that they may be more capable of understanding and appreciating the facts and evidences, the doctrines and duties of the scriptures. Another reason for them is to increase the influence of the missionaries with the people, by communicating some advantage which they can

1. J.P. Naik and Syed Nurullah. Op.cit, P.33.

appreciate, and by showing that Christianity rests on an intelligent perception of its doctrines, and contains reason for the performance of all its duties. And another reason for such an education is in its procuring means and opening ways of access to the people, and opportunities of preaching to them. One of great difficulty which missionaries often experienced, is on obtaining access to the people, in circumstances where Christianity can be made the subject of communication or conversation. In such circumstances schools become very important, as a means of communication with different classes of people, with children and parents, and with men and women. And school-houses also become important as places for becoming acquainted with people, for social intercourse and religious worship. School-houses become chapels under the control of missionaries. The use for this purpose is often more important than education.”² It soon equally evident that the missions had to conduct schools for the converted population and most of the early converted were lowest rung of the Hindu society. They were also generally illiterate and in Christianity reading the Bible was held to be essential for salvation. So, the missionaries were required to established schools in order to teach the new converts to read and write and for the same purpose the missionaries were also compelled to introduce the printing press and print the Bible in Indian languages. The missionaries had also to start vocational schools and to secure employment under government to the converts in order to give them a living and a status in the society. In fact, the early missionaries found that their work began, rather than ended, with a conversion, and that their main task was not so much the conversion of the people to Christianity as the improvement of the social, cultural and economic condition of the converted people-an object which could only

2. *Ibid.* P.39.

be secured by conducting schools for their education.³ It is also can be said that the missionaries soon realized that the schools were both the cause and effect of proselytization and that educational and missionary work had to be undertaken side by side . It is also out of this realization that the mission schools of modern India were introduced. Prior to the 1813 the missionary enterprise was in slow growth due to several causes. The most important of which was probably the hostile attitude of the British East India Company. The attitude of the company was generally favourable to missionary enterprise prior to 1765 but a change began to come about as soon as the British East India Company became a political power in India. The acquisition of sovereignty made the company conscious of the political importance of maintaining strict religious neutrality and this realization made it abandon all its former sympathy for missionary enterprise.⁴ As British East India Company's empire began to expand, it became more particular to maintain religious neutrality and to sever all connection with missionary enterprise and incidents like that of the Sepoyee Mutiny at Vellore strengthened these ideas and by 1800, the East India Company became a staunch opponent of all attempts at proselytization and tried to keep the Christian missionaries out of its territories as far as possible. In the same way the adaptation of the Orientalist policy in education between 1781and 1791 deprived the mission schools of the sympathy and support of the company which they had enjoyed so far.⁵But the Christian missionaries did not like these changes and began to criticize the new policies and also to plead for a return to the old days. In 1793, when the Charter of the British India Company came up for renewal, Wilberforce moved a resolution in the House of Commons. In his resolution he opines that it is the peculiar and bounden duty of the British Legislature to promote by all just and prudent means the interest

3 *Ibid.*

4. *Ibid.* P.45.

5. *Ibid.*

and happiness of the inhabitants of the British Dominions in India. And that for these ends such measures ought to be adopted as may gradually tend to their advancement in useful knowledge and to their religious and moral improvement. Wilberforce realized that a pious resolution like this had no administrative value. So, he proposed to insert a clause in the Company's Charter. That is the court of Directors of the British east India Company should be empowered and commissioned to nominate and send out from time to time sufficient number of skilled and suitable persons who should attain the aforesaid object by serving as schoolmasters, missionaries or otherwise.

The Court of Directors opposed the proposal of Wilberforce violently and they had then fully realized the importance of the policy of religious neutrality in considering their empire in India and they also knew that the missionaries with their excessive zeal for conversions invariably got into trouble with the native Indian people. Nor were the Court of Directors apparently anxious to undertake the duty of educating the native Indian people even apart from giving them religious guidance as desired by Wilberforce. For political and financial reasons, therefore, the Court of Directors urged that the Hindus had as a good system of faith and of morals as most people and that it would be madness to attempt their conversion or to give them any more learning or any other description of learning that what they already possessed. So, on this ground the proposal of Wilberforce was not accepted by the Parliament and this defeat had a set-back to missionary enterprises. The East India Company's position on the missionaries issue was then greatly strengthened and it began to put all possible obstacles in the path of missionaries who worked in their dominions. This active hostility of the Company enraged the missionaries who, in their turn, began to criticize, not only the anti-missionary policy of the Company, but its political and

commercial undertakings and even the personal conduct of its officials.⁶The relationship between the British East India Company's official and missionaries became therefore, extremely strained after 1793. J.P Naik and Syed Nurullah, in their work, *A Students' History of Education in India* stress that

“It may be said without fear of exaggeration that, between 1793 and 1813, the Company did not ordinarily issue a permit to any missionary to work within its territories, expelled several missionaries as soon as they became active and tried to covert people, put every obstacle possible in the way of the missionaries, and did not give any assistance even to mission schools. In India the missionaries were powerless to fight against this policy. They and their friends, therefore, began an intensive agitation in England with the object of persuading Parliament to legislate on the matter and give the necessary freedom and assistance to missionaries. The foremost among those who thus agitated was Charles grant-the father of modern education in India”⁷

In 1813 the Charter of the Company came up for renewal and among other educational issues, another important educational issues was also discussed that is should missionaries be allowed to go to India and work in the territories of British East India Company for the education and proselytization of the native Indian people. The 13th resolution of the Charter Act in which the missionary question was involved in this way:

“Resolved that it is opinion of this committee that it is the duty of this country to promote the interest and happiness of the native inhabitants of the

6. *Ibid.* P.46.

7. *Ibid.* P.47.

British dominions in India, and that measures ought to be adopted as may tend to the introduction among them of useful knowledge and moral improvement. That in furtherance of the above objects sufficient facilities shall be afforded by law to persons desirous of going to, or remaining in, India for the purpose of accomplishing those benevolent designs'. That meant that the missionaries were to be allowed to enter India and to reside there; they might preach, found churches, and discharge all spiritual duties; in a word, they might fulfil their missionary calling in its completest in widest sense.”⁸

The charter Act of 1813, marked a turning point in the history of modern Indian education and with this Charter the agitation which Charles Grant and Wilberforce on for nearly twenty years came to be successful in conclusion, and the Christian missionaries began to land in India in large numbers and established English schools, thereby laying the foundation of the modern educational system.

4.2 Educational Works

By the late 18th century in South India, the royal Danish mission headed by Ziegenbalg, Kiernander and Swartz had opened charity schools which taught Gospel to Indians through its translation in local vernacular languages. They also had English classes attached with the Gospel not only for the children of the Company officials who could not afford to go to England, but also for the Eurasians and the Indian converts. In 1813 when Charter Act was introduced in the house of Britain there was a common question that is should missionaries be allowed to go to India and work in the territories of the British East India Company for the education and proselytization of the Indian people. Finally the 13th resolution of Charter Act of 1813 open the way

8. *Ibid.* P.56.

Missionaries to the way of India. After the Charter Act of 1813 had removed all restrictions imposed on the entry of the missionaries in India by the East India Company when it became a territorial power, many of missionary organizations in Europe and America became active again.⁹ As the result of this in 1818, in Bengal the Baptist missionary Society established the Serampore College to train native Indians, both Christian and non-Christians, in arts and sciences of the West. Under the auspicious of the Calcutta Committee of the Church Missionary Society founded in 1817, and Captain James Stewart founded schools at Calcutta, Burdwan, Khulna and Krishnanagar in Bengal and Chunar and Meerut at Agra. In 1820, the Bishop College was founded by the Church Missionary Society at Shibpur (Howrah) in the honor of Bishop Middleton, the first Bishop of Calcutta. Between 1814 and 1818, the London Missionary Society founded 36 schools and the schools were attended by nearly 3,000 children in Bengal. It also served as the joint Government-Missionary enterprise in the field of vernacular education in Bengal. The Church Missionary Society and London Missionary Society also extended their works in vernacular schools to others parts of British India. In the Bombay presidency, the London Church Missionary Society select some towns in Gujarat while the church Missionary society was active in the districts of Poona, Thane, Bassein and Sind. In 1813, the American Marathi Mission started its work and two years later they also open a school for boys. In the Madras presidency in 1817 the society for promoting Christian Knowledge establish nine schools with a strength of 283 children and the Wesleyan Mission, starting its work in 1819, established two schools in Madras city- one of them at Raypet which later grew to be the present Raypet College.¹⁰ In 1824 the same mission also established two more schools at Nagapattam. In 1829, with the arrival of Scottish

9. Suresh Chandra Ghosh, *Op.cit*, P.302.

10. *Ibid.* P.303.

Missionary, Alexander Duff, the activities of various missionary organizations received a new momentum and a new direction. According to Alexander Duff, the salvation of India depended on what the Bible could offer and hence the upper classes must be brought into contact with the missionaries through western education. In 1830 he set up the General Assembly's Institution at Calcutta and out of which emerged the present Scottish Church College. His institution also imparted western learning through the medium of English and the study of Bible made compulsory course for all who joined it. In this way missionary activities started and spread in whole over India.

4.3 Beginning of Missionary Activities in Barak Valley

The educational works in Barak Valley is mainly confined with the Presbyterian Christian missionaries. The Baptist and catholic missionaries were also in Barak Valley but no educational records are confined with them. In March 1849 Rev. Mrs. William Pryse arrived to Cherrapunjee but Mr. Pryse visited Sylhet at the end of the year and he came back with the heavily burdened heart. Mr. Pryse and Mr. Lewis wrote a letter to the Directors of Wales for permission to open a mission at Sylhet and the Director also granted them the permission of establish a mission at Sylhet. In 1850, Mr. and Mrs. Pryse moved forward to Sylhet from Cherapunjee and he began missionary activities in the plains on somewhat similar lines those followed on the hill regions. In 1851, Mr. Pryse visited to Cachar plains and he travelled up to borders of Manipur. In 1856 Pryse opened a school in Silchar; the capital town; and so began the missionary operations in the Cachar district.¹¹ Captain Steward the government agent of British government in Cachar also provided enthusiastic support to the work of Pryse and in 1863 a high school was also opened in Silchar with 150 pupils. From

11. Vanlalchhunga, *Marvellous Mission*, Mizoram, 2007, P.145.

1861 to 1866 Mr. William Pryse visited Cachar many times and he also extended his mission so far as north and South Cachar Hills. William Pryse was also attracted by the Cachar Mission and he was also quite willing to transfer his work in Sylhet to someone else so that he could devote his whole time to work in Cachar himself. In July 1867, the General Assembly of Liandloes, unexpectedly terminated Mr. William Pryse as a missionary because, he had connections with the other Mission bodies. But Mr. Pryse decided to remain in India and finally he entered into business relations with a lime quarry company. Unfortunately on 2nd August 1869, Mr. Pryse passed away due to a serious illness. Due to the unavailability of persons to serve as missionaries in Sylhet, the General Directors meetings held in December 1872 resolved to discontinue the works on plains.¹²

After fifteen years of abandonment of Sylhet and Cachar missionary activities, the General Assembly of Aberdare was held on 13 to 15 July 1885 and it was also decided to resume that the missionary operations on the plains of respective areas without any delay. As the result of these Rev. & Mrs. J. Pengwern Jones and Miss Sarah A. Jones arrived Sylhet on 28th November, 1887 to resume the works on Sylhet and Cachar plains. In 1892 the missionary personality like Rev. & Mrs. J. Pengwern Jones, Rev. Dr. T.J. Jones, Miss Elizabeth Williams, and Miss Brownlow carried missionary activities in Sylhet and they were assisted by Miss S. Das and Daniel Ghose. Two missionary ladies Miss Laura Evans and Elizabeth A. Roberts also arrived in Sylhet on 15th December 1892 to continue missionary activity in the respective areas of Barak Valley.

12. *Ibid.* P.146.

4.4 Silchar the Second Mission Station

By the end of 1892 all the missionaries in the mission opines that it would be beneficial to move T.J Jones from Sylhet to Cachar to establish a mission station in the Cachar plain area. T.J also desire to work at Cachar because William Pryse had previously begun some work in Cachar's plain areas. By the end of the 1892, T.J Jones got permission from Missionary Committee to look after a suitable place to establish a new station at Cachar. A Commission was appointed to choose the best place to establish a new missionary station, which consisted of Dr. T.J. Jones, Misses Williams, Roberts and Laura Evans and Daniel Ghose, the Bengali evangelist.¹³ On 29th January, they left Sylhet and visited Maulvi bazaar, Habiganj, Balagunj, and Karimganj respectively, and finally they came to Silchar. They stayed at Silchar for a week and sold 600 scriptures in the bazaar and Mela. Not only these, they also preached the word of God in the bazaar and mela while selling the scriptures. By the end of 1892 and the beginning of 1893, three Indian Aborigine missionaries Rev. J.H. Lorrain, Rev. F.W. Savidge and Rev. William Pettigrew were in Silchar and they were seeking permission from Welsh missionaries to enter Lushai Hills and Manipur. They also informed to the Welsh Mission that they would welcome the Welsh Missionaries to come to work in Silchar.

The commission moved forward to Rampur Tea Estate and Rampur tea Estate is situated 8 miles away from Silchar. The commission found a numbers of Christian coolies in the Rampur Tea Estate and the manager of the Rampur Tea Estate Mr. Ross Jones, a Welshman was very keen and desirous for the mission field to appoint a teacher to live in the tea garden and offered 5 rupees a month toward his remuneration. On 24th February 1893, the Commission came back to Sylhet and they

13. *Ibid.* P.147.

decided to select Silchar for the second mission station in the plains because William Pryse former missionary had already established a Mission School in Silchar some years ago. Finally the commission's proposal was accepted by the Directors of Welsh and Silchar became the second Mission station. Before the end of March 1893, for continuing mission work in Silchar, Rev. T.J. Jones, M.A. Ph.D. left Sylhet and two lady missionary that is Miss Elizabeth William and Laura Evans also joined Dr. Jones at Silchar in the month of May 1893. During that time Silchar was the chief town in Cachar district and during the early times of the Welsh missionary the population of the Cachar was 313,000, while that of Silchar was about 7000. According to the statistics received from Dr. Jones, there were 8 Communicants, 4 Candidates, 10 Children 50 in the Sunday schools.¹⁴ Not only that, 86 students were also attended the day school.

4.5 Educational Activities at Cachar

The concept for the beginning of educational work conducted by the Christian missionary work is associated with Mr. William Pryse, and it is also mentioned in the beginning that William Pryse opened a school at Silchar, the chief town of Cachar district in 1856. The establishment of schools was followed by the opening of High school in December 1863, towards which a monthly government grant of 60 rupees was sanctioned by Captain Stewart a government agent of British government of that time. Within few months, the numbered 150 but this is however was not satisfactory so far as the missionary concerned and due to the incapability and unreality of teachers, trouble arose in the education system introduced by the missionary. Unfortunately no proper records were maintained in the schools so; it was not possible to know the progress of the schools. Mr. William Pryse desired to develop

14. *Ibid.* P.148.

the educational work in Cachar and he also got enthusiastic support from Captain Stewart. A committee comprising of 14 Europeans and natives was also formed to superintend the educational work and among the members the names of two Welsh persons were found and they were Mr. David Morgan of Glamorganshire, Magistrate at Silchar and Mr. T. Phillips, a native of Monmouthshire. by the time of cold weather approached in 1865, Mr. Pryse had a numbers of schools in Cachar plains of Barak Valley. Among them were: Cachari School in Barkhola, which was supported by the widow of the old Cachari king, Gobinda Chandra, who was murdered in 1830; Manipuri School in Lakhipur, Naga (Kabui) school in Binakandi; and Manipuri School in Katigora.¹⁵ Arrangements were also made for sending teachers to numbers of other villages outside Silchar of Cachar's plain that is Hailakandi and Tarapore etc and a portion of that is one half of expenses of each school was borne by the British government. As far as books concern William Pryse's policy amongst the tribes was to prescribe English and Bengali, but to explain everything them through the medium of their native languages. In 1865, there were 11 schools with 39 teachers and 1011 scholars.¹⁶

When Welsh Missionary started their mission work in Silchar, a good numbers of natives of Silchar had express their desire to transfer the Girls' school, which originally belonged to the Municipal authority to the missionaries and they had also one or two meetings to consider the matter. The inspector of schools of Assam also visited the school and gave very favorable report and he further advised that Girls' School should be transfer to the missionaries. Finally in 1893, the Girls' School of Silchar was transferred to the hands of missionaries and Miss Elezabeth Williams was in charge of the school. She began the work about the middle of the June with 8 girls

15. *Ibid.* P.158.

16. *Ibid.*

but by the end of the month there were 25 and it further increase to more than 40. About the nature of the students Miss Elizabeth Williams opines “Though a great many of women here are Bengalis, still they are much more enlightened than their sisters in Sylhet. Many of them can read and write fairly well. There are amongst them many families from Calcutta and other parts of Bengal, who have been from their childhood in some kind of a connection with missions; some of them have been attending Mission schools and so have heard of Jesus Christ from their childhood. This makes it easier for us to obtain admission to them.”¹⁷ Rev. Vanlalchhunga’s, ‘Reports of the foreign mission of the Presbyterian Church of Wales on Sylhet-Bangladesh and Cachar India 1886-1955’ stated that in the year ending of 31st December 1893, in Cachar there were 8 teachers and 77 scholars in the Sunday School and there were also 102 students in day school, amongst them 47 were boys and 55 were girls.

In 1895, Rev. T. J. Jones reported of the work in the chief town of Cachar “The schools have not done so well during the last year, and have decreased in number. The baptism of Prem Konjor, who had been in the school up to 1894, caused a number of parents to take away their boys. We hope, however to gain some back again. There was also a decrease in the attendance at girls’ school. The girls failed also in the upper and lower primary Examinations. With a Christian teacher is to be hoped that better work will be done and more religious instruction given.”¹⁸ He also reported that two Sunday schools were also open and the schools were doing well. In these schools many students were attended and the children had made much progress in the knowledge of the life of Christ and in connection with these schools a new day

17. Vanlalchhung, *Reports of the foreign mission of the Presbyterian Church of Wales on Sylhet-Bangladesh and Cachar India 1886-1955*, Silchar, 2003, P.23.

18. *Ibid.* P.37.

school was also established. He also reported that with the death of Chokrador, one of the best members of church in Rampoor and a faithful teacher in the Sunday school received heavy blow at the work of Rampoor. The school at Rampoor was also not in very flourishing and some of the Christian parents also neglect to send their children to school regularly.

In the year 1896 Rev. T.J. Jones was regret that he could not send the statistic report of the year 1895 and he also stated that the figure of progress was similar with that of 1894. As per report the missionary work was slowly but steadfastly growing in Cachar district and in Silchar station the numbers of Christian natives had grown. According to him, in Silchar there were three Sunday schools, and not only the Sunday schools the missionaries also managed location for preaching services for Christians. The preaching meetings were managed in two different bazaars of Silchar on every Sunday. The Sunday schools were held in the classrooms used for day schools. In this way the missionary schools answered two purposes. In the school Christian instruction cannot be expected to be welcome by the non-Christian children. As the result of this the boys' school had suffered and sometimes the attendance was very small but after some care and trouble done by missionary many were brought back. Itkhola a part of Silchar where Prem Konjor taught, stories were circulated to the effect that he, a convert, was paid for stealing, children and bringing them to house. As the result of this one day the inhabitants of the vicinity of Itkhola met in council, and decided not to send their children to the missionary school anymore. The missionaries also met some of the parents afterwards and also explained them the nature of the school and the school gruel again. About the condition of Rampoor Rev. T.J. Jones reported that the missionary works seems to be like the previous year, there was no much more progress. Only the Christians attended the Sunday and week day

meetings but they were not very enthusiastic and very few of them send their children to the school regularly. That caused as much grief for the missionaries because the missionaries expected Christians to appreciate a Christian school. However the school answered its purpose as a missionary school well and a number of Manipuri children from neighbouring village attended the school. Amongst them some of the students were very bright and they also learning well. Christian instructions were also given to the boys of the school because the missionary felt that the Manipuri people were very much bigoted *Hindus* and were brought to learn about Christ. Rev. T.J. Jones also felt that without school and education the missionary could not do anything with the Manipuri peoples and these peoples were the large and important one in Cachar, so the missionary could not ignore them. The manager of the Rampoor Tea Garden has promised to build a school in another part of the Rampoor Tea Garden and this will help the evangelist to extend his work there among the children and young people.

In the letter dated 5th March of 1896 Miss Elizabeth William stated the following reports of the work she engaged in Cachar, Silchar.

“The girls’ school is held in the summer month from seven until ten in the morning, and in the winter from eight until eleven. All the children belong to families in good circumstances, excepting the little orphan children we have under our care. Their ages range from three to eleven years. There are but a few Mahommedan families living in Silchar, so that we have no Mahommedan girls in the school. The number on the roll at the end of 1896 was 48. Five or six others should be added to these, - new pupils who are put on probation for three weeks or a month. If at the end of the month they have been coming fairly regularly, their names are put on the register. Our school is now in its third year, and I do not think that I have informed you

before that it is the only primary school in the plain of Sylhet and Cachar. We sent four the girls for the Lower Primary Examination, and they all passed. One of them obtained a scholarship of three rupees a month for two years, which is the time between the two examinations. As our school was then only a lower primary school the girl who gained scholarship must be sent to the girls' school at Dacca. Her parents would not consent to this, so we had nothing to do but keep her in our school and allow her to study here for the Upper Primary Examination. In this way the school came to be an Upper Primary girls' school. In nine months after the following examination was over, she was withdrawn from school, and in two months afterwards she was married. In February of this year two other sat for the examination, and you will be glad to hear that they have both passed. One of them has gone to Bethune College, Calcutta, and her father is a broad Brahmo she will be able to continue her studies for some years. The others little girl continues to attend our school in order to learn English, but I am afraid that she will very soon be taken away to be married. She is fond of coming to the school, as indeed all the girls appear to be. Visitors to the school always remark on the bright and happy appearance of the children. At the close of the school, all the classes are brought together for religious instruction. One day the lesson will be to learn a new hymn, another time verses or stories from the Bible; and we know from what we hear in the Zenanas that our labour in this respect is not in vain. In another twenty years what a change there will be in this land when the little girls who now come to school will have become mothers, and will not be afraid lest their sons and daughters

should embrace the religion of Jesus Christ. I desire to cordially thank all friends, young and old, who have sent gifts for the use of the school.”¹⁹

From the above lines it is clear that the Silchar’s Girls school was the only school in Cachar which persuaded education to the girls. The missionary also tried their best for promoting education amongst the inhabitants of Cachar and Silchar. It is also indicated that along with the academic teachings the missionary also tried to promote their religion amongst children of the school by teaching them the stories and hymns of Bible.

In a letter of October 9, 1896, Miss Elizabeth Williams opines that during the month of October there occurred the most popular festival of Hindus, called the *Durga Puja* and all the government offices were close, some for fortnight, and some for a month. The missionary schools were also made up of little Hindu girls so it was also close. There was also the evidence of withdrawing girls from the missionary schools by the native parents.

“A Babu who occupies a house near the school went to persuade some of the peoples not to send their little girls any more to the mission school, that they did nothing but ‘sing of Jesus’. Needleless to say, the Babu himself was the first to withdraw his own girl of eight years, but not before she had learn many verses, Bible stories, the children’s hymns, particularly those translations of Welsh and English hymns by Mr. Pengwern Jones. This little girl was observed one day with a number of women gathered around her, while she sang to them some of those of hymns. I do hope she will come back after the vacation; the others came after a fortnight’s absence, looking

19. *Ibid.* P.47.

so guilty. However, lest they should run away again, I do not say anything to them that lady.”²⁰

From the above line written by Miss Elizabeth William in her letter it is also clear that at the missionary school of Silchar verses the stories of Bible, the children hymns, particularly the translation of Welsh.

According to the reports of Dr. Jones in the year 1897 the Sunday schools held in the chapel had been faithfully attended by the scholars and they had been examined twice in the portion of the Scriptures read and they also answered very well. The missionaries also adopted the International Sunday School lessons and they also believed that it would be advantages for the Christian scholars. There was also the evidence of renovating the school at Itkhola. “The school at Itkhola which was built by the contributions from America some 24 years ago, was thoroughly renovated this winter. The expense was paid again by money contributed by friends in America. It is now a substantial building, with good wooden posts, and will last some years with ordinary repairs.”²¹ Miss Evans in her reports it is mentioned that their pupils in Silchar might be divided into three classes that is first those who listen to the Bible lessons because the pupils would not otherwise have their sewing lessons. Second, those pupils who were intellectually convinced of the truth of Christianity, and third, those pupils who by heart are Christians, but whose circumstances prevent them from confessing their faith openly. The first category students listen with a bored expression, and sometimes interrupt with skeptical remarks. The second group of pupils did not listen with the same scorn, yet with them it is something to be put up with, and the time of Bible lesson is always that in which they want to be especially busy about something else. The last and the third category students to whom it was

20. *Ibid.* P.46.

21. *Ibid.* P.55.

always a joy and pleasure to go, though outwardly Hindus, yet in their heart they believe and trust in Jesus as their only Saviour.

In the year 1898 Miss Laura Evans reported that their girls school was put under a trial in last (1897). The locality of Silchar believed that only Christianity was taught in the mission school so, in the month of July 1898 Hindu girls' school was also open and this school was very much close to the missionary school. A Brahmin Pundit was also engaged in the newly open school and the Pundit went from house to house begging the parents to send their girls to him, and every effort was made to take the girls away from missionary schools. But it didnt done too much effect to the missionary girls school in Silchar. On this occasion Miss Laura Evans reported " I am glad however to be able to say that only six went, and I think that upon the whole the new school has done more good than harm to ours, for the number has increased instead of decreased."²² In the year 1899 Miss Laura Evans reported that their works in Cachar (Silchar) were divided into three parts that is the schools, the medical works and the Zanas and their girls' school was held 7 to 11 in the morning. There were quite thoughtful children, plodding away all their books, who must win the teacher's heart and there were also the quick bright maiden who ever ready with an answer. Away in the corner yonder the girls loves anything and everything better than ABC. Miss Laura Evans also believed that the students were their fertile sowing ground, and who know the lovable Bengali nature would affirm that the work must be as happy as it was hopeful. Some students were more advanced than others and the missionaries divided their school into three classes for the Bible lesson. The Bengali students had excellent memories and one would be delighted to hear them answer questions on Old and New Testament stories. The school was also closed with prayer and hymns in

22. *Ibid.* P.63.

which all join, and one could not but are struck with the reverent manner of the little Hindu children, as they stand with bowed heads, and their little hands put up in the attitude of the prayer; no brown eyes were seen peeping through the fingers. In her report Miss Laura Evan reported “At the age of twelve these still infant pupils must leave school to be married; and they are not allowed to go out after that. How short then is the time given us to bring Christian influence to bear upon these young lives, and we ask your more earnest prayer for those who are day by day telling the story of Jesus and His love, that they may be more eager in trying to win these little souls for Christ, for the thousands of children in Cachar not within reach of our school; and for those who attended it, that the seeds sown upon such tender soil may be fostered and ripened by Heaven’s rays, when the little ones have passed beyond the reach of their Christian teachers.”²³ In the same year Dr. T.J. Jones also reported that the works on Sunday schools was carried on as usual, and the number of scholars continued about the same with the past year. The children attended the school which was held in the chapel committed a large number of verses to memory. The Rev. Richard Burgees, Secretary of the Sunday School Union for India, also has given high praise to the school for the future of its work. Three of Dr Jones School’s scholar obtained certificates at the examinations on the International Sunday school lessons and one of them also stood high in the second class. A boy from Silchar also got success in an examination on the life of Christ and he gained the first prize of his year at the college and received twelve months education free at the Duff Institution. The Christian colleges of Calcutta also cooperated in that matter and also offered three scholarships to three highest in that examinations. The boy was the Hindu and his parents were very zealous for their religion but their son had attended the Sunday school of

23. *Ibid.* P.72.

missionary. Dr. Jones further reported “he was for years a member of Mrs. Jones’ Class; he afterward went to Dacca, where he read with the Rev. W. Carey. He answered all the questions correctly, and I do not believe that any Christian would have given better replies. I examined him myself before he entered for the college examination, and he answered all the questions correctly, and repeated several portions of the scripture.”²⁴

In the year 1900 Mr. T.J. Jones reported that there were two day schools for the boys in Silchar and one of the schools was under the charge of him and the school made progress during the year. The boys of the school had greatly increased and they had marked progress in knowledge and behaviour. The missionary also tried to bring some of the principles of kindergarten system, and they also hoped that would do well, and will be means of drawing others to attend. In the school of Itkhola the children were mainly the lower class coolies so it was very difficult for the missionaries to get them to attend school. In addition to the day school at Itkhola, the missionary also had a Sunday school too, and they preached regularly every week in the open air and they also got a good congregation and alternative hearing. As the majority of these people come from other parts of India as coolies. So the missionaries tried to preach them in the Hindustani language and the coolies also know about little Bengali. The Sunday school of Itkhola was attended by the children of day school and it was held in every Sunday morning. At Itkhola the missionaries also tried to make both the day and Sunday school handmaids of the Gospel. In the year 1900 the school held in the chapel had increase in number and the children had also done good work with their lessons. Amongst the children one gained first class certificate, one a second and one a third in the annual examination of schools in India.

24. *Ibid.* P.74.

Mrs Jones also successfully started new class with the women of Silchar after returning from Wales but she faced difficulties to get Bengali women to attend public meetings even after they become Christians.

Mr. T.J. Jones again reported that in the year 1900 the missionaries open a reading room for the young people and there were also a small library connected with it and they took in newspapers and monthly periodicals. Some native people also had kindly sent papers for the use of reading rooms. Rev. W.E. White, a missionary among the Europeans in South Sylhet, after seeing the work, forwarded many volumes of books and periodicals to the mission of Silchar. On that event Mr. T.J. Jones opines “We would be very pleased if friends who take interest in young people would send us books and papers likely to be helpful and useful to them. We consider the work an important one, as it is a means to bring the young under the influence of the gospel, and there are likely to fill important stations in the country some day. I feel that it is very important for a missionary to be able to bring Christ in a simple and smooth way under the notice of this class.”²⁵ From the point of view of Mr. Jones it is clear that the missionary would like to spread Christianity along with the education and they also knew that education was the only instrument which can connect the native people and the Christian missionary. So by taking the help of education they want to spread their religion. The study room was opened three times a week and after reading for a time the following classes were held they were, on Tuesday a literary meeting, on Thursday evening bible class, and on Saturday evening a class to discuss any subject that might be prominent at that time. In his report Mr. Jones further added about the mission station at Rampoor. The work at the station was carried on 1899 in

25. *Ibid.* P.82.

the face of difficulties but in spite of all there had been good deal of faithfulness with the day school and religious meetings.

Misses Elizabeth Williams reported about the Day school for Girls of Silchar under her charge, "There were 51 names on the roll at the close of the year. The average attendance throughout the year has been better than usual. Although the school is not yet under Government we prepared for the annual examination. Last year one of the girls distinguished herself by coming out first on the list-boys and girls-in the whole of the Cachar district. It was decided, as she has done so well, to give her a scholarship of Rs 3 a month for two years. When she received the money for the first quarter, one of the first things she did was to come here accompanied by her father to return Rs 5 of it for the use of the Mission. We appreciate the feeling that lay under this more than anything, especially as her father is a Hindu. The deputy Commissioner has expressed his wish to give a silver medal for the school this year, and another friend has promised to prizes to the best for repeating the Sermon on the Mount."²⁶ In the year 1901 Miss Evans was absent from the mission station of Silchar, so Miss Williams had not sent the report of the work under her care. Only Mr. T.J. Jones reported the educational works of missionary at Silchar. According to him the work had been carried on the same line as in past years and the Sunday school was very successful in the examination of the Indian Union. All the candidates with the exception of one, gained certificates and the school which was held in the chapel had increased in numbers, but Ithhola had gone a little. Mr. Jones took the charge of women's class which Mrs. Jones had formed, when she return to Wales on account of her health. In that class the members showed great progress in knowledge and they also attended the school very regularly. When Miss Evans retunes Silchar after her

26. *Ibid.* P.83.

furlough, Mr. Jones gave the class over her. With the return of Mrs. Jones the Boys school suffered a great loss. He prepared one boy for the lower primary examination but he had abandoned the idea afterwards. Mr. Jones also reported that some native of Silchar after converting to Christian they made progress in education and amongst them Prem Ronjon Upadhya, Hemronjon Sirkar, Abdul Hamid was prominent. Prem Ronjon Upadhya became Christian in 1895 and after he had embraced to Christianity he read with Mr. Jones for some time and afterwards proceeded to the theological Institution of Cherra, where he had made great progress, both intellectually and spiritually. In March 1901, at the Shangpoong Presbytery, he passed the evangelists' examination successfully and afterwards he became teacher and had done much work amongst the Khasis in Marwacherra, about 14 miles from Silchar. Hemronjon Sirkar had not been away from Silchar and he prepared his examination with Mr. Jones and he passed the examination with third on list. Before embracing Christianity Abdul Hamid was a *Mohomedan* and in 1900, he was with Mr. Reese at Maulvi Bazar. On his return to Silchar in September 1901, he established a school near his home, Sonaibari, a place six miles distant, for the Nagas, a tribe in habiting the surrounding hills. Anoda K. Ghose in the deacon of the church also done his work well and he also had preached regularly in the Chapel and in the Bazaars. In 1902, Rev. T.J. Jones, Rev. J. Gerlan Williams, Misses Elizabeth Williams and Laura Evans were the missionary of Silchar station. According to Mr. J. Gerlan there were three Boys school at Silchar and one was at the distance of 7 miles from Silchar town, which was close to Abdul Hamid's residence, an evangelist and also the teacher of the school. He work in that school was rather difficult as it was a school opened among a very backward hill tribe called the Nagas who had came down to settle on the plains. Another two evangelists, Prem and Hem conducted schools in the main town. The

chief difficulties in those two schools were perpetual reminders of the possibility of coming to the Christian faith through the mission schools and that kept the numbers of boys very low. Miss Elizabeth also reported that the girls' schools in Silchar also made progress. In 1901 they had 60 names on the register and attendance was also very regular. In the two upper classes the girls prepared for the government examination and one of them distinguished herself in the Lower Primary Examination. Miss Elizabeth further added, "She came out at the top of the list of boys and girls in the Cachar district, and a scholarship for two years. Last February she entered for the Upper primary examination, and passed well, gaining another scholarship for two years. She pursued her studies, and sat for a still higher examination but was obliged to discontinue her work as it is so much against *Hindu* custom to send a girl of her age to school. It is strange how quickly her history has found its way into several houses in the town."²⁷ From the report of Miss Elizabeth it is clear that the Christian missionary found difficulties spreading education among the girls of Cachar district but the girls were making incredible progress in the field of education. The British government Inspector of Schools and Chief Commissioner of Assam also visited the girls schools of Silchar and they were also very much pleased by the progress of the schools. Miss Elizabeth felt that the school had become then an important institution and it also took great deal of her time every day. And it would be very advantageous if the missionaries were able to devote more time and labour upon the school, so the *Hindus* could not in any way compete with the missionaries in the matter of female education. During that time the *Hindus* by doing their best ability had taken out a number of girls from the missionary schools and send them to

27. *Ibid.* P.100.

indigenous Hindu schools. Miss Elizabeth felt that the girls did not go willingly but they were in most instances compelled.

In the year 1903 Mr. J. Gerlan reported that he started a monthly service at Badarpur, for European and Eurasians, employees of the Assam Bengal Railway. Badarpur was like to be become a still more important on the railway as a new section was to be opened connecting the valley with the upper Siam valley. The Roman Catholic already settle there but the priest was a very broad minded person and he had kept to his own flock. Gerland added, "Last year we had to close two of our schools, one in a village close by. Another school was opened there by a Hindu teacher, and although he charged fees still the parents preferred paying rather than risk the danger of their children becoming Christians. The other school was in Naga Village. In the rainy season the children could not attend and the teacher was taken to preach in the station, and hitherto I have not been able to spare him or else the school could have been opened at the beginning of the cold season."²⁸ In the year 1903, Miss Elezabeth was glad to reported that the numbers of scholars keep up well, though several had left the missionary school lately and the missionaries had succeeded in passing the girls who were sent for the Government examinations, and that was matter to which the Hindus attached great importance. The girl who was prepared for the lower primary examination in 1902 had passed so well in the year and she also got scholarship for 2 years. The parents of the girl constantly felt difficulty in sending her to school. According to them the girl was then big but in fact she was only 11 years of her age. But the missionaries had tried to do their best to prepare her for the Upper Primary examination and the girl went successfully through the examination. After the examination the girls were kept away from the school and it made felt

28. *Ibid.* P.108.

disappointments and disheartened the missionaries. The Sunday school in Silchar was in the charge of Miss Elizabeth and Miss Evans. Miss Elizabeth reported, “When the news spread that there are cloths in a shop on the way to India the attendance become larger and every Sunday, until we have a congregation of from 50 to 60 and upwards. After receiving the view cloths and while they continue to look pretty well, the children continue to attend faithfully until the weather becomes warmer again, and then their zeal gradually cools and the attendance falls to 20 or 15. There were several amongst them who do not of course know the difference between Sunday and any other day, and it is necessary that some should go round to bring them together.”²⁹

In 1905, under the care of Miss Laura Evans another Girls School was open at another part of Silchar town and these two Girls Schools at Silchar were quite successful. But there was an intention to unite these schools, so that the lady missionaries may confine their full time to the school, instead of only morning shift that was being practiced.³⁰ Regarding the Girls Schools at Silchar Miss Elizabeth William opined that the parents of the girls allowed their girls to walk backward and forward to the schools and the missionaries also considered themselves very fortune in this respect. Rev. Gerland Williams and the Commissioner discuss about the unity of two girls schools and Commissioner further promised to the missionaries that the government would built a large school in Silchar, so that the two girls schools could merge. A school of that size would cost between 2,000 and 3,000 rupees and the British government also would be willing to transfer the complete school buildings into the hands of the Christian missionary. In January 1906 British government also accepted proposal of granting building of new school at Silchar and the government would give the land where the school was to be built free-no payment being due and

29. *Ibid.*

30. *Ibid.* P.160.

also 100 rupees amounts towards the up keep and maintenance of the school. In return the missionaries would be responsible for a ghari (cart) to carry the girls to school.

In the beginning of 1907, before Garland Williams began his journey back home to Wales another new school was also opened with the enrolment of 116 girls and a school bus service was also started in Silchar. After the inauguration of new school in Silchar Miss Laura Evans school was closed down. Slowly and gradually at the beginning of 1913, the level of the school was raised from middle school to high school and in 1916 the Inspectress of schools also visited Silchar and made following remarks “Of the work in the body of the school, I cannot but speak too highly. It is clear that English Ladies give the entire time to supervising and personally teaching. The result are very nearly as good would be found in a first-rate English school. Some girls have obtained full marks in certain subjects in the Middle English and primary scholarship examination. Twelve of the Christian girls have passed the First Aid Examination this year. This is excellent.”³¹ The Commissioner of Barak Valley also paid visit to the school and he was also very much satisfied by the systematic and coordinated teaching system of the school. In subsequent years many schools has been closed in Assam valley but Silchar Girls school kept open because in Silchar there were no other schools for the girls to attend. Due to the rapidly growing number of students, the British Government erected a large and well constructed school building in 1917 and in 1929 the students of the school numbered up to 234 with 21 in the Training classes. The Christian missionaries intended hand over the Silchar Girls School to the municipal board and finally in 1939 they handed over the school into the hands of Municipal Council. In the same year they also handed over another four

31. *Ibid.* P.161.

Namasudra schools to the Local Board. In this way the Mission come to an end of an era in their educational work on the Cachar plains.

Especially for the *Hindu* women, in 1914 the missionaries started Teachers' Training Class in the Girls School of Silchar. In the starting year 5 women attended the class, and amongst them there were 2 Hindu widows, 2 Hindu married women and 1 Muslim girl but due to some unavoidable circumstances, the teacher training class was discontinued after 1924. During the ten years of the school that is from 1914 to 1924, over one hundred women had passed out. To educate and prepare the Christian girls to be the member of the Christian church in the plain and be faithful witness to the Lord Jesus in their home and village life, a Girls' Vocational School was open at Silchar in 1941. In the school the girls were mainly instructed in various practical subjects such as cooking, housekeeping, child welfare, care of the sick, hygiene, needlework and weaving. After handed over of Silchar Girls high school to the Municipal board the mission intended to have a Mission school for Christians girls only in Silchar and in September 1939 the new school building construction also started. No contractor was engage to do the work so; the construction was done under the direction of Mr. Reese. According to the missionaries the 20th March 1940 was a historic day because on that that day new Silchar Girls School was open and Miss Laura Evans the senior lady missionary inaugurated the school. On this occasion Miss E.M. has written "we open with 50 pupils, today they number 64. We are nearing the completion of our first year's work, and steady progress."³² Practical subjects like cooking, housekeeping, child welfare, care of the sick, hygiene needlework and weaving were taught in the school and the missionary also tried to upgrade the classes up to class vi. From 1943 to 1946 because of the war between Japan and Britain the

32. *Ibid.* P.165.

missionary could not maintain the school properly and the military authorities requisitioned all the missionary buildings.

4.6 Educational Work at Karimganj

At Karimganj educational work of the mission was started by Dr. Williams and Miss Dass. In 1895, Dr. William in his report it was stated that Karimganj was just midway between Sylhet and Silchar, on the high road, it was a central and important river station for steamer traffic. Half of the people were Hindus, and count Krishna, Shiva, and the goddess Kali and Durga as their principal objects of worship but there were no Buddhists and no reformed sects and the other half of the people were *Mohomedans*. A high school for boys had been established there and a few of the boys there knows English. So, the missionary had done a little in the way of Bible classes and they expected that much and more progress in education in coming years. The mission erected a small hall (in reality a thatched bamboo house) and a Girls school was also opened. Sunday school services and Bible classes were also commenced. In 1896, the sub-inspector of school visited the school and he was very much pleased to see the progress of the educational work of the school. In 1898 Miss Dass reported that in looking back upon the previous year, the work in the day and Sunday school at Karimganj had been very encouraging. In the middle of the December the girls were examined by the local government sub inspector of schools. The inspector was also very pleased by the result of the school and he said that the children had done well, what they have learnt from the school. Miss Dass further added that the summer and rainy season were the great drawback to the daily number of girls. A few of the Patru, the Hindu fisherman class girls came daily from quite a far off places and they also read and write very nicely. In the year 1897 the girls were 20 on roll. The number of attendances at the day school during the year was 3749; at

Sunday school 794; the number of verses learnt by the Sunday school girls is 1028.³³ In the year 1899 Dr. O.O. Williams reported that the missionary welcomes the children of their servants in the schools. Several students of the high school had attended the Sunday bible class and a few were in regularity and one of the boys from high school stood a scripture examination organized in Calcutta. Mrs. Williams had also a small class of children in Sunday evenings and taught them children hymns in addition to scripture lessons and Miss Dass' also conducted her school successfully on Sundays as well as on week days.

In 1901, Mrs. Gerland Williams opened a school for the poor girls in the nearby villages, but this school was soon closed down because she had to move to the Hills with her little girl to avoid the heat.³⁴ But Miss Dass's school was making progress and in the middle of 1898 the school examination was conducted. The girls of the school also performed well and the government's sub inspector was the witness of it. At the end of 1899, Mr. Boot, the Directors of the schools also visited school and he was also pleased by the children's work in reading and writing. The Deputy-Inspector of schools also examined the students of the school and he was also very much impressed by the progress made by the school and the students. up to 1912 Miss Dass conducted the school but from 1913 Miss M.A. Jones took over the charge of the girls' school, and again in 1915 Miss Hetty Evans took the charge.

For the girls a new school was built in 1925 and it was inaugurated by the Minister of Assam. On this event, the minister opined that the record of the Welsh Mission would be written in the letters of gold, when the history of female education in Assam came to be written. On the same occasion Mr. Roy the inspector of schools also opined that the good manners and high moral tone of the girls of the school

33. Vanlalchhunga, *Op.cit*, P.64.

34. Vanlalchhunga, *Op.cit*, P.169.

struck him and it was like in others girls school. He further added that the mission schools also helped to uplift civilize the country. Miss Blodwen William took over the responsibility of the school in 1935 and in November 1936 the Governor of Assam visited Karimganj to open new Girls school at Karimganj and in his speech the Governor referred to the considerable and widespread work of the Welsh missionaries in the province on the field of education. At the end of the February 1937 Karimganj Girls School came to be close and due to the closing of the schools the missionary teachers and hostel girls moved to another centers (Silchar). After many years, the Presbyterian Church of Mizoram, Synod mission board established an English medium School at Karimganj, called “Rowlands Memorial High School”.³⁵ The school building was inaugurated in 1986 by Rev. Lalpianga. The school was established in the memory of Dr. Miss Helen Rowlands. Dr. Miss Helen Rowlands is known for her missionary activities at Karimganj. She served at Karimganj for 40 years. In 1940 she founded *Dipti Nibash* for widows and orphans. She always rejoiced in her work and there was no limit to her activity. She also never complained of fatigue, though she often looked utterly worn out. Dr. Miss Helen Rowlands was also a professor in the Government College of Karimganj and delivered lectures twice in a week. In December 1958, Sir Saiyid Fazi Ali, Governor of Assam came to Karimganj and opened the Rowlands Hall in Karimganj College. In present day Karimganj College has Library Hall called Rowlands Hall in the memory of Miss Helen Rowlands.

35. *Ibid.*