

CHAPTER - FIVE

IMPACT OF WESTERN EDUCATION ON BARAK VALLEY

5.1 Role of Education

Education has long been one of the key to equal opportunity and the ladder to advancement. Before the coming of state education in the late nineteenth century, the careful rationing of education by an elite, with its comfortable sop to Cerberus by way of charity schools and Sunday schools for the children of the poor, was unquestionably the major cause of underachievement in every civic and working sense, of the main body of the people, until they were given a more real educational choice and opportunity in this century.¹ And the western and sophistication of a multidisciplinary state education has brought with it's a new discrimination.

The education system introduced by the British promoted western knowledge and science among the Indians and contact with the western thought also helped to developed democratic and liberal ideas among the Indians. As the result of the Clause 43 of the Charter Act of 1813, there were also the emergence of middle class in the capital cities of British India. "As English was fast becoming a language of rulers, many Indians soon discovered that a capacity to speak and write English helped them materially. With increasing clerical post in the growing British establishments, including some mercantile establishments which were first becoming since the beginning of the nineteenth century, the knowledge of English proved to be useful."² The ordinary masses of India had no much idea about the benefits of the western

1. B.D. Bhatt and S.R. Sharma, *Women's Education and Social Development*, Kolkata, 2000, P.2.
2. Suresh Chandra Ghosh, *Op.cit*, P.303.

education but some educated and liberal minded Indians, through their long interaction with the Europeans had realized the futility of pursuing English education. So they tried to educate the common masses. Amongst them Raja Ram Mohon's name is remarkable. Western education also give birth the feelings of nationalism among the Indians. The educated Indian began to think for their country. Many English educated Indians also form a numbers of social organisations to fight for national integrity and freedom. In 1885, Allan Octavium Hume founded the Indian National Congress to help native Indians to let their stream of discontent out but soon a section of Indians was drawn to militant nationalism. By that time British official had realised their blunder of introducing English Education in India and they took several measures to stop its spread further but vain.³ The western educated Indians also took active part in the freedom struggle of India. The emergence of newspaper was also an impact of western education. After getting western ideas and science Indians began to print their own newspaper and use it as an instrument against the British rule in the freedom struggle. After the departure of the British, leadership in India was also fall to the western educated Indians.

With the introduction of western education in India, there were also increased in the literacy rate and also increased in the establishment of educational institutions. Western education also produced a numbers of Indian personalities who wish to do something for their own people. The western educated Indians tried to uplift the Indian social system through education and they also took active part in the establishment of educational institution. They used education as an instrument of social change. In 1831, Rasik Krishna Mallick, a brilliant product of the Hindu College started Hindu free school at Simla where 80 students received education. In

3. *Ibid.* P.8.

1832, Kalinath Ray Chaudhury and Baikunthanath Ray Chaudhury of Taki also started a local school for teaching English, Arabic, Persian and Bengali and five hundred students attended the school. Because of the woods despatch many Indians came forward to setting up schools. In 1855-56 there were no universities in India but in 1901-02 there were 5 universities. 1921-22, 14 universities and 1946-47 there were 17 universities. Talking about the primary and middle school, in 1855-56 there were 50,676 primary schools and it increased to 172, 681 in 1947-47. In 1901-02 there were 4323 middle schools and it again increased to 11162 in 1946-47.

Educational institutions (1855-56 to 1946-47)

Year	1855-56	1901-02	1921-22	1946-47
Universities		5	14	17
Middle schools		4323	6739	11162
Primary schools	50676	97854	160070	172681

Source J.C. Aggarwal, Modern Indian Education, history development and problems page 11⁴

The most remarkable achievement of the British western education system was to introduce India to English language and literature and through them, to all the thought, the scientific and industrial development and the social and political philosophy of the west. This contact came at a very opportune time, when Indian culture and social organization were at their lowest ebb but it had a tremendous vivifying effect. It freed the Indian mind from the “thralldom of old-world ideas” and laid the foundation of a Renaissance in modern life and this contact, its early excesses apart has also greatly enriched the mosaic of the native Indian cultural pattern. It has been a boon to India and the west alike. India owes the scientific and critical study of

4. J.C. Aggarwal, *Op.cit*, P.11.

her ancient culture to European scholars whom British contact brought on the scene and there is also world of difference between the study of Sanskrit literature as it used to be carried on in an indigenous Pathshala and it is conducted today in a university department of classical studies. The previous and old method was of uncritical preservation and the new method is one of the scientific and critical analysis section, simplification, balancing and enrichment and the lead is the new method came from western scholars of Oriental languages. They might have frequently blundered; but to them we must acknowledge our gratitude for the first discovery of a tool which have since made our own and improved.⁵

The modern form education was introduced in India to meet the needs of Britain and its progress had also been restricted and its character, from the standpoint of the progress of the Indian people was unsatisfactory. The main purpose of the introduction of English education was to supply the English-knowing personal to the British apparatus and mass education had been seriously neglected throughout. A.R. Desai, in his work *social background of Indian nationalism*, stress that “After more than a century of the British rule, 94 per cent of the Indian population remained illiterate in 1911, and 92 per cent in 1931. The number of students receiving education in primary and secondary schools amounted to 13.5 million only which meant 4.9 per cent of the entire population in 1934-35. Even of these, two-thirds who studied in primary schools did not study beyond the first year and less than one-fifth reached the final year.”⁶ During these periods the majority of children in primary schools were under instruction for between three and four years only and for the greater portion of the time also four out of every five linger in the lowest class. So there was a tendency to lapse into illiteracy after the short period of instruction came to close. The illiteracy

5. J.P. Naik and Syed Nurullah. *Op.cit*, P. 416.

6. A.R. Desai, *Op.cit*, P.142.

and resultant ignorance among the native Indians inevitably obstructed economic, social, and political progress. The number of students studying in higher education institutions was 159,254 in 1941-42 with a total of about 0.5 percent of the population.⁷ The economic development of a backward country like India of that time also demanded educational cadres trained in technical studies. In 1934-35, the students graduating in engineering agriculture or commerce numbered only 960.⁸ So the greatest shortage had been in technical education and in the field of agriculture, commerce and engineering, one separately settled.

The first contact with modern western culture through new education was electrifying but Modern or western education also created an unhealthy reaction among a section of the native Indians who received it. The essential rational and liberation core of the western culture however was not comprehended by a section of Indians. While correctly discarding old norms and criteria which only imposed fetters on the free creative initiative of the individual, the educated Indian failed to substitute, in their place, rational norms and criteria to guide individual conduct.⁹ He misunderstood freedom from all irrational taboos as freedom to do anything that a chance impulse incited and he also mistook freedom as license to drink or to indulge in unhealthy modes of sex life. While overthrowing old authoritarian conceptions of social life, he could not evolve a positive social conception and his reaction to old milieu was predominantly also negative. He saw through the irrationality of the old forms and outlooks but could not build up a new positive and progressive theory for individual and social practice and this resulted anarchy in his personal life and brought about his isolation from the people. He also developed an unheroic contempt

7. *Ibid.*

8. *Ibid.*

9. *Ibid.* P.132.

for others regarding social and cultural backwardness instead of feeling the historical responsibility of the intellectual vanguard to guide people from the stationary and superstitious social existence to a progressive democratic free national life. As the result of these a chasm developed between him and the people and he also branded the people as 'barbarous, in return the people called him 'anglicized' and 'denationalized'.

5.2 Western Education and Indian Women

Women education had been neglected in India for a very long time and their position and status in Indian society have been subordinate and inferior to men. The *Vedas* accord a very honourable and respectable status to women and accordingly women were not only eligible for education but also received higher education and status. Women could occupy administrative and other important jobs mostly perform by the men but it was only during the middle ages, women education and status began to decline. Women had been denied not only education but even the basic rights of better life, moreover, popular view considered education was only as the means of turning out white collared clerks for the new administrative and economic systems introduced by British in India and when it was almost universally held that, since women had not to earn their livelihood, there was no need of education for them. In such circumstances naturally the question of women education was ignored by the Government and despite pressure exerted by missionaries and liberals, was unconcern with female education.¹⁰ The Christian missionaries showed interest in women education and schools for girls because, they argued that women needed to be brought into the fold to make conversions permanent, but since men made the decisions women education was ancillary. Thus prior to the efforts of the British Government to

10. Ruma Bhattacharya, *Op.cit*, P.42.

introduce women education, the Christian missionaries had, however, worked in that direction in a limited way and it has been also acknowledged by all that, in the earlier phase, female education in India was pioneered by the Christian missionaries. In is also evident that in Madras the foundation of higher education of girls was laid by Christian missionaries and in 1824 also they started a girls' school in Bombay.

In Bengal also earliest attempt to educate native Indian Hindu women was not made by the state, but the entire credit was due to two English women, who in 1819 more than a generation before the Indian Universities were established, first tried to elevate the condition of Indian women. The names of Lady Amherst and Miss Cook, the two pioneers of female education in India, show that women can do to benefit women belonging to any religion, race and language.¹¹ Slowly and gradually British government also began to take interest in women education of India and amongst them Lord Dalhousie, the Governor General of India from 1848 to 1857, declared that no single change was likely to produce more important and beneficial consequences than women education. In 1854, for the first time Wood's Education Despatch recognize female education as a branch of the state system of education. According to the Despatch, the importance of female education in India could not be over rated and they had observed with pleasure the evidence which was then afforded of an increased on the part of many of the native Indians to give a good education to their daughters but that means a far greater proportional impulse in imparted to the educational and moral tone of the people than by the education of men. According to Wood's Despatch, the total number of girls' school in Madras was 256, in Bombay 65, in Bengal 288 and in north Western Provinces there were 17 schools. But in Punjab the

11. *Ibid.* P.43.

traditional education of female was continued as an indigenous effort and the modern system of girls' schools had just to come into existence.

The development of women education had been a very slow and difficult process in India due to the state's attitude and partly due to the indifference and hesitation of the native people. At the same time, women education had to face some difficulties which were inherent in Indian social system itself, viz., the system of *Purdah* and child marriage, lack of women teachers and girls' schools and absence of a suitable curriculum for girls.¹² Because of these social custom and reasons the progress of female education had been very slow in our country.

After the revolt of 1857, the funds began to be spent more freely on female education and as a result of this there was an expansion of education amongst girls, and in 1871, for the girls there were 1,700 primary schools and 134 secondary schools in entire India. Hunter commission in 1882 considered the question of women education in all aspects of syllabus, teaching staff, lady inspectors etc. The commission also recommended that the Government, district Board must bear the expense of female education and it also did a great service in emphasizing the need of education for girls. In the field of higher education it would be very interesting to study the attitude of university of 1857 to female education in India. The universities considered the university examinations were designed for men alone but not in least for women. With the efforts of Mr. Hobhouse, the vice-chancellor of Calcutta University, women were allowed to appear at the examinations from 1877. As a result of these in 1882, two women, Kadambini Bose and Chandramukhi Bose, graduated from the Calcutta University and in the year 1883 the University of Bombay also removed the obstacles in the way of female candidates for admission for various

12. *Ibid.* P.44.

examinations. In 1904 Lord Curzon, in a government resolution on education policy, pointed out that though some advancement has been made in female education, as a whole, it was still in a very backward condition.¹³ So, Lord Curzon collected more funds for the advancement of female education and during the same period Mrs. Annie Besant also established the Central Hindu Girls' School at Banaras with the object of imparting western education to girls quite separately from boys in a modernized school of Hinduism. Lady Hardinge College, the first medical college for girls was established in 1916 in Delhi and in the same year the women's University was also established.

Hartong Committee which was appointed in 1928 recommended the ways for improving the state of women education and also decaled that in the interest of the advance of education as a whole, priority should be given to the claims of girls' education in every government scheme of expansion. The Committee observed great disparity between the education of boys and girls and recommended the appointment of an experienced women officers of higher standing at the head quarters to prepare plans and programmes for the expansion of girls education, representation of women in all the local bodies and educational committees and to increase the strength of the inspecting agency for girls schools.¹⁴ During the period from 1917 to 1947 there was significant development in India in the field of economic and social impact of two world wars, the national awakening, progress in economic and social matters and finally India got its independence on 15th August 1947 and these factors also had contribution in a good deal to the growth of women's education.

The British government, the missionaries and Indian social reformers contributed a lot in the up gradation of women's status and introduction of female

13. *Ibid.* P.45.

14. *Ibid.* P.46.

education in India. The impact of the education system started by the English had a great impact on the women of India.

5.3 Impact of Western Education on Indian Women

By the turn of the 20th century the number of schools for girls and enrolment had risen dramatically and guardians were also gradually realizing that the education of their daughters is as much a part of their duty as the education of their sons. During this period the demand for educated wives also developed. The education departments also took some active steps and devised new plans for spreading education, that is, separate schools for girls, arrangements of conveyance for taking girls, and appointment of inspectresses. Liberal prizes were offered to the girls and fees were also remitted at times. Many schools run by local bodies were transferred to Government, and favourable grants were given to private girls' schools. Not only these teachers of boys' schools were also rewarded for every girl whose attendance could be secured, steps were taken to attract ladies to the teaching profession, and provincial committees with a fair proportion of lady members were setup for discussing the problems of girls' education. The next important step was the Government Resolution of Education Policy of 1913 which observed that the total number of girls receiving education though raised from 444,470 in 1901-02 to 844,363 in 1910-11 but that remains insignificant in proportion to female education.¹⁵ In 1917 also there were 12 arts colleges, 4 professional colleges and 166 secondary schools for girls and enrolment of these institutions was also increased. As a result of the women education there were also the springing up of women societies, such as, the Women's India Association, founded in 1917 under the guidance of Dr. Annie Besant and Margaret Cousins. The National Council of women was also established in

15. *Ibid.* P.45.

1925 and many other local organizations in various states of India worked seriously to promote the cause of education among women. From this point it is also clear that the women education in India was in progressing and it was due to the efforts of the British official.

Girls under instruction, 1921-22 to 1946-47

Institution	1921-22	1931-32	1941-42	1946-47
Primary schools	1,087,131	1,944,070	3,123,643	2,715,230
Secondary schools	124,954	196,170	410,333	442,403
Arts and science colleges	1,207	2,685	11,778	16,284
Professional colleges	266	521	1,725	2,468
Professional schools	19,570	17,568	40,869	38,375

Source: S.N. Mukherji, Education in India: *Today and Tomorrow*, Udaipur, 1969, p. 243.¹⁶

Indian history witnessed that women have been able to display outstanding capacities as administrators, stateswomen and warriors. Amongst them the poet-queen Meera Bai of the 15th century, Nurjahan, who guided the policy of the Mughal emperor Jahangir for more than a decade, Ahilaya Bai, the warrior queen and Rani Laxmi Bai known as the Indian Joan of Arc. These women and many others distinguished themselves in the different spheres of religious and statesmanship and in qualities of wisdom and learning, courage and imagination. B.D. Bhatt and S. R. Sharma, *Women's Education and Social Development*, stress that “such women, part of the cultural history of India, who have gone into the legend and folk stories, provided evidence of the fact that, in the early history of India, there existed opportunities for education and self-expression until the time of the foreign invasions

16. *Ibid.*

from the north-west. However, in spite of the existence of these exceptional women, there was no system of organized education for women for about eight centuries (A.D. 1000 to A.D. 1800) owing to political and economic unrest and foreign invasions.”¹⁷ Social customs such as early marriage, seclusion of women like *Pardah* system etc. were also largely responsible for the disabilities suffered by Indian women during these years.

But after the coming of the British and introduction of western education in India the condition of women was dramatically changed. The colonial history also witnessed that a numbers of educated Indian women sprang up in India and they also work for the up gradation of the status of the women in India. There were some women who were well educated and also done incredible work for the women and their society. The Calcutta born Vina Mazumdar was one of the contemporary India’s well-known feminist scholars and she was born in a middle class family. Her mother’s struggle for educating her through reading was indulged by her father and instead of these, her mother bought books and magazines from her household savings, enabling her daughter to become a voracious reader. Vina Mazumdar started her collegiate education in the Women’s College, Benaras Hindu University and by the middle of 1944 she joined Ashutosh College Calcutta, for B.A. honours and by the middle of 20th century she went to Oxford. Belty Kemp. She returned in 1950 and in 1951 she joined Patna University as a lecturer in political science to begin her chosen profession.¹⁸ Sister Subbalakshmi completed her matriculation and enrolled in presidency college, Madras University and she was the first Hindu widow in Madras to study for a B.A., she was threatened with excommunication, harassed in the streets, and ostracized in the classroom. By the year 1911 Sister Subba lakshmi had

17. B.D. Bhatt, and S.R. Sharma. *Op.cit*, P. 143.

18. Ruma Bhattacharya, *Op.cit*, P.48.

completed her B.A. degree and was ready to begin her life's work and she also set up her school in her father's home in a Madras suburb and began with a class of four Brahmin widows.

5.4 Impact of Western Education on Barak Valley

Education had made more progress in the Cachar plains than in other parts of the province. The number of pupils under instruction in 1880-1, 1890-1, and 1903-04 was 3,025, 5,157, 7,900, and 8,0900 respectively.¹⁹ That the development of education has been satisfactory is also evident from the fact that the number of pupils at school in 1903-04 was more than three times that of the number twenty-nine years before. At the Census of 1901, 5 per cent, of the population in the plains (9.1 males and 0.4 females) were returned as literate. Only a small proportion of the natives of the north Cachar hills know how to read and write, and the percentage of literacy in the plains is reduced by the large number of ignorant coolies brought up to the tea gardens. There were 245 primary, 6 secondary, and 2 special schools in the district in 1903-04. The number of female scholars was 298. The enormous majority of the boys under instruction and all the girls are in the primary stage. Of the male population of school-going age 19 per cent., and of the female population of the same age less than one per cent., were under primary instruction. The total expenditure on education was Rs. 63,000 of which Rs. 13,000 was derived from fees. About 43 percent of the direct expenditure was devoted to primary schools.

G.T. Lloyd, in his Census of India, 1921, collected some opinions regarding the education system of colonial period. The opinion of his correspondents, non-official as well official, are almost unanimous that the first object of those embracing

19. B.C. Allen, E.A. Gait, C.G.H. Allen, H.F. Howard, *Gazetteer of Bengal and North-East India*, New Delhi, P.451.

education is materials and social advancement; in a few cases only, generally in the hills, it is suggested that religious reasons combine with the material, while pure desire of learning for learning's sake is hardly mentioned.

Mahamahopadhyaya Pandit Padmanath Bhattacharje, M.A., of Guwahati, says that “education is desired nowadays for material and constantly for social advancement. Money is the only thing now cared for- and that comes from education.” Srijut Ratnadhhar Barua from Sibsagar had also written that “Education is desired only for material advancement, specially service or appointment under Government or private companies. Even the people of the agricultural classes do not like it- or they think it beneath their dignity to plough in their own fields only if they have read in schools. School education has deprived the people of the sense of the dignity of labour.” An opposite opinion from Sibsagar was given by Pandit G.D. Misra, Vidhyabhusan, who said that “Unlike Bengal, education here is sought by all classes of society in all its diverse forms..... The villagers want to acquire the capacity for reading the government notice and circulars, and religious books, the vogue of newspaper and magazine reading is also spreading apace.”²⁰

Babu Dwijesh Chandra Chakravatty, Dewan of Gauripur Raj, Goalpara, remarked that in addition to the material motive, the instinct of education runs in families among the higher castes, while “lower castes look upon education as a common leveller, and this social advancement is no meant factor in inducing people to educate their children.” The same point was noted by Babu Jagannath Dey of Silchar. He quotes Chanakya's dictum “an educated man respected everywhere” and notes that the so-called unclean castes have risen much in the social scale by means of education; they can mix with the higher castes, on an equal footing in school and

20. G.T. Lloyd, *Census of India, 1921, Vol 3, Assam, part 1, report*, Shillong, 1923. P. 107.

officers; they can also improve their manners and custom and thus mix more easily with member of other castes ---for example, the Yogis and Patnis of Cachar are said to have gained much in this way by education.

As to female education, there had been a general expansion of the liberal view and as shown in the census figures reflect this. {see appendix table no 4} Opinions were divided to the effect of education on girls. While collecting views of the villagers G.T. Lloyd come to know that girls neglect domestic and other works that are considered mean and derogatory, such as drawing water, husking paddy, cleansing utensils and cow-houses, cooking, etc. But another writes “They do not appear to neglect their domestic work at this stage of their education.”²¹ Girls of Ao Nagas, educated by the American Baptist Mission, were said to neglect their field work, and cases are quoted of their falling into immorality through idling in the villages. But they carry on domestic work in their houses as before.

The opinions G.T. Lloyd had quoted were samples of a large number he had received and they apply partly to primary and partly to secondary education. The conclusion was that boys and girls alike, elements of both good and evil emerge from our present system of education. Expense was the great obstacle to a wider expansion. Primary education was free in Assam, though not yet compulsory anywhere. The cost of clothes, slates and books, however, was prohibitive in many cases for the poor cultivator. A boy at home can look after the cattle or help in other way, and he need wear only a meagre loin-cloth, if anything at all ; at school he will be expected to appear in a respectable dhoti and will have to spend something for the necessaries of learning. The census report figures for the number of literate children under 15 years of age were far below the numbers shown in the departmental returns as reading in

21. *Ibid.*

schools. The reason for that appear to be, first, large proportion (as yet illiterate) in the lowest classes of primary schools struggling with the alphabets or the first reader, and second, the question of expense which compels parents to remove scholars before they have completed a proper course.

The abysmal ignorance of book-learning among the manual labourers on tea gardens was also well known. In this regard G.T. Lloyd added “A few years ago attempts made to introduce primary education among the coolies, with the co-operation of garden managers. Three types of school were proposed Government, aided private and unaided private; managers who agreed were allowed to choose which type of school be established. All schools were free. The result has been a dismal failure. A few managers were enthusiastic; many were indifferent. Some, considering that education would cause distaste for manual labour when the children grew up, were hostile or merely tolerant. The number of schools originally sanctioned was not reached in practice, and most of those actually started have faded away. Most of the coolies themselves were averse from the scheme. They saw in the hours spent on education by their children a loss to the family income, since children can and do earn wages for certain kinds of garden work.”²² (in the appendix 2 shows the literacy on the tea gardens in 1921.

5.5 Emergence of Libraries and Printing Press

The progress of education is closely linked with the facilities booksellers, libraries and printing presses.²³ As a result of the progress in the education the demand of books also increased. The very first and earliest book stall in Silchar was started by Babu Mahananda De at Dewanji bazaar. Another student’s library was also started at

22. *Ibid.* P.108.

23. J.B. Bhattacharjee, *Op.cit.*, P.237.

Janiganj. The Headmaster of the Government High School had to procure the required text books for his students from the Society's Calcutta Office which was stationed at Silchar. During that time M/S. S.K. Lahiri and Company and M/S. Thakar Spink and company were the main book supplier but they could not fulfil the demands of the books and the establishment of the Saraswati Library by Babu Baidyanath De to some extent solved the problem. With the progress in the enrolment of the students Government High School maintained a school library from the beginning and other schools also began to maintain their own libraries to meet the demands of the students. The Normal school library was known for its rare collection and similarly, the Gurucharan College authorities had also taken interest in developing the library and reading habits of the pupils. Jayanta Bhusan Bhattacharjee, in his work *Cachar under British rule in North East India* mention "in 1935, Dr. H.K. Mukherjee, Vice Chancellor of Calcutta University, was happy over the display of newspapers and journals in the student's common room. As early as in 1876, a public library, known as Keatinge Library, was established at Silchar during the visit of Sir H. Keatinge, Chief Commissioner of Assam (1874-76). Renamed as Arun Chanda Granthagar since independence, it has recently been merged with the District library"²⁴

In 1885 Cachar district has its own printing press and the Silchar printing press, which now exists on Central Road was the first printing press founded by Babu Hara Kishore Gupta and it was also followed by the establishment of another printing press Sadhya press by Babu Radhakanta Sadhya. In the beginning of the 20th century, Aryan Insurance Company also established Aryan Press and it was closely followed by the Cachar Press of Babu Satyadas Roy and Jayanti Press of Babu Gajendra Chandra Datta. With the growth of the printing press also facilitated the progress of

24. *Ibid.* P.238.

journalism and earliest known newspaper of Cachar district was Bengali weekly *Silchar* and it was printed in the Silchar Press and edited by a teacher of Narshing M.E. School, Babu Bhusan Sen. He was also popularly known as Bidhu Pandit, and he used it unsparingly against both officials and non-officials. From the Aryan Press another Bengali weekly *Surma* also began to published in 1911, Pundit Chandra Dey Vidyavinode was the first editor and he was succeeded by Pundit Bhuban Mohon Vidyarnava. The Aryan Trading Company at Silchar was the owner publisher and the paper was converted into daily in 1914 and it kept the people informed about the development of First World War. Being discontinued for some years in the twenties, the *Surma* resumed its publication in the thirties under the editorship of Babu Nagendra Chandra Shyam, the noted lawyer-litterateur of Cachar.²⁵ Shri Hurmat Ali Barlaskar, became the editor in the forties and he also the editor of another Bengali weekly *Azad*. Likewise another newspaper, daring in spirit and constructive in criticism, the *Surma* also played a great role in guiding the public opinion in Cachar district and on occasions forced the British Government to note its comments. The newspapers also acted as a fillip to the literary pursuits in Cachar district by opening columns for young talents and Nagendra Chandra Shyam, Ashoke Bijoy Raha, Ramendra Deshamukhya and Sudhir Sen were among the regular contributors. In 1929 Bhabishyat, a Bengali monthly publication also came into existence and Babu Aswini Kumar Chakravarty of Shillongpatty, Silchar was the editor. The paper was printed at the Calcutta Printing Works, Calcutta and published from Ukilpatty, Silchar. In 1935, the Gurucharan College Majlis also brought out handwritten magazine, Kundakali and *Purbasree*, the college Magazine, came into publication since 1940. In 1930 Vijoyini was published as the organ of the Silchar Mahila Samiti

25. *Ibid.* P.241.

and it was edited by Khushi Mohon Das and in the year 1937, Saptak, a literary magazine also published. Before the introduction of the western education in Barak Valley and Silchar there were no sign of printing Press, journals. Editors were the well literate person of the Barak Valley, so, the emergence of printing press library and publication of journals were the direct outcome of western education.

The intellectuals like Bidhu Bhusan Sen, pundit Bhuban Mohon Vidyarnava a great name in the history of journalism in Cachar and besides his association with the *Surma*, Bhuban Mohon edited *Deshabrata* and *Janasakti* from Sylhet. Not only these, he was also associated with *Hitavadi* and *Sadhana*, which was published from Calcutta and Dacca respectively and he was also an ardent nationalist without belonging to any political party and wielded his pen forcefully for the national cause. A numbers of intellectuals also published a numbers of books in Cachar and amongst them Babu Suresh Chandra Bhattacharjee, a teacher in the Silchar Government High School, published his book *Cachare Mahaplaban*. Jayanta Bhusan Bhattacharjee, in his work *Cachar under British rule in North East India* mention, “that the Bengallees are poetic by nature may be supported by the information that one Shri Barenya Bejoy Choudhury, a student in Silchar Government High school in the thirties; on listening the narration of a teacher about how his affectionate grandmother would preserve sweets for him two months before the vacations when the teacher himself was a student, immediately wrote a poem *Amar Thakurma* and presented it to the teacher. A similar incident was reported in 1911. On the coronation Day of King George V, a procession of the school boys paraded through the streets of the town. A student of class ix in the government High School had composed a poem synchronizing the occasion and it was sung by the boys when they marched in procession. The poem was full of noble sentiments and possessed excellent literary

merit. The composer was awarded a special medal by the Director of Public Instruction and printed copies of the poem were distributed among the students in schools and colleges.”²⁶ From this incident also we can assumed that with the introduction of new education system in Barak valley the literary work of the valley also increased. It also reflects the activity of the students of schools and the schools also produced a numbers of new talents. So it is evident with the spread of western education in Barak Valley, the literacy rate increased and it also accelerated the literary activities of the Valley. The Third Surma valley Literary Conference was also held at Silchar and many local poets writers presented their compositions.

After the introduction of western education besides the newspapers and magazines a numbers of literary works were published from Cachar. The progress of education added consciousness of the people and the role of the intellectual middle class in social economic and political behaviour of the people exposed its inherent characteristics.

5.6 Increase in the Literacy Rate

Primary education is ineffective unless it at least produces literacy and the only definite material for ascertaining the prevalence of literacy in India is that provided by the Census and a person was defined as a literate for census purposes if he or she could write a letter to a friend and read the reply. According to the census report of 1931, of the natural divisions the Surma Valley stands an easy first in the proportion of literacy, there being 110 literates in every 1000 persons in that Valley aged 5 and above. In 1931, Cachar plain and Sylhet were the next best district of Assam in literacy rate and which almost had dead heat with 112 and 110 literates per million. According to Census report of 1931, “with a steady spread of education this is exactly

²⁶*Ibid.*

what we would expect. There are now-a-days many more opportunities for children to acquire literacy than formerly and hence the proportion in the age group 15-20 which represents persons who have recently passed the ordinary school-going age should be larger than among older people”²⁷. From these lines it is also clear that in 1931, the school going students were increasing and literacy rate amongst them also increasing.

The literacy rate in Surma Valley was increasing from 1931. There was a huge difference between the literacy rates of 1911 and 1931. In 1931, the proportion of literate Hindu has risen considerably, namely males from 212 to 255 per Million and females from 29 to 48 per million. The advancement in Cachar plain areas was also being particularly good. Next to Hindus, but a long behind them, comes Muslims and their proportionate increase in literacy rate was also decidedly satisfactory. In Surma valley the increase had been from 85 literate males per million to 120 and from 4 literate females per million to 19. Sylhetti Muslims are considerably more backward in literacy than Sylhetti Hindus but they have made remarkable progress during the last ten years and, if they maintain it, the next generation of Sylhetti Muslims should be very nearly as literate as the next generation of Hindus.²⁸ From this line it is clear that the literacy rate in Bengali Muslim of Barak Valley also in progress in 1931.

In the census of 1931 there was also an increase in persons who literate in English. From age 5 to 10 there were 41 males and 9 females, from age 10 to 15 there were 127 males and 19 females and from age 15 to 20 there were 353 males and 25 females and from age 20 and over there were 224 males and 15 females were literate in English per 10,000. When looking back to last three Censuses that are 1901, 1911 and 1921 the literacy rate in English was also increasing day by day. In 1901, all ages five and over there were 37 males and 5 females in per 10000 people. In 1911 there

27. C.S. Mullan, *Census of India, 1931, Vol 3, Assam Part 1, Report*, Calcutta, 1932, P.151.

28. *Ibid.* P.156.

were 127 males and 6 females per 10000 peoples and in 1921 there were 185 males and 11 females in per 10000 people.

G.T. Lloyd, in Census of 1921 vol-iii part I report, mentioned that “the number of secondary schools has more than doubled in the decade, and this is reflected in census statistics of those literate in English, the 1921 figure being more than twice that of 1911. Increasing numbers of boys continued to obtain the hall-mark of competency for clerical service under Government but find no post awaiting them. Nor can private service in offices and like positions absorb the ever increasing number of passed matriculates and others who have to leave school and stop their education owing to want of means. As a result the cry has gone up for more technical education; but it is to be feared that no better fate will await the students of technical institutions than that of brothers who have had a literary education, unless the number and scope of industrial undertakings in the province show more tendency to increase that can be foreseen at present.”²⁹ From this line it is clear that the literacy rate of 1921 was doubled than in 1911. A factor responsible for the increase in literacy rate was due to want of jobs in government office by the upper and middle class people.

5.7 Education amongst the Lower Caste Community

In this regard in 1921 in the census report G.T. Lloyd added a point noted by Babu Jagannath De of Silchar, “He quotes Chanakya’s dictum “ an educated man is respected everywhere” and note that the so-called unclean castes have risen much in the social scale by means of education; they can mix with the higher castes on an equal footing in schools and offices; they can improve their manners and customs and thus mix more easily with members of other castes- for example, the Yogis and Patnis

29. *Ibid.* P.107.

of Cachar are said to have gained much in this way by education.”³⁰ This lines clearly reflects the caste system and education of Barak Valley. Before the introduction of western and English form of new education system only Brahmin and Pundits had got the opportunities for education. But after the introduction of western education every caste and class of peoples began to study. From these lines it is also clear that education can change the social system and it can also abolish the social bar between the high and lower caste people.

In the year 1911, there were 18 males and no women were literate in English in per 10000 persons in the Patni group of people and in 1921 it increased to 18 males and 1 females in 10000 persons. And in over all literacy there were 76 males and 5 females in per 10000 persons in 1911 and it again increased to 45 males and 2 females in 1921. The yogi community, there were 41 males who were literate in English and no female in per 10000 people and in the year 1921, but in 1931, it increased to 101 males and 3 females who literate in English. Talking about the overall literacy there were 6 females and 130 men in 1911 and it increased to 178 males and 13 females in 1921 in per 10000 persons. Namasudra, Sutradhar is also can be seen in Bengali community of present day and the impact of education can also be seen amongst them. In the year 1911, amongst Namasudra’s there were 49 males and 1female in literacy census and it was increased to 67 males and 4 females in 1921. Amongst them in 1911, 5 males were literate in English and in 1921 it increased to 40 males and 1 female in per 10000 persons. In 1911 amongst Sutradhar, there were 103 males and 2 females were literate in per 10000 persons and 1921 it increased to 156 males and 7 females. Amongst them in 1911, 21 males were literate in English and in 1921, 88

30.*Ibid.*

males and 1 female were literate in English in per 10000 persons. For details see appendix 4.

5.8 Western Education and the Women of Barak Valley

In the 1882 Silchar Municipality was formed in the name of ‘Station Committee’ and with the contribution of station committee a girls’ primary school was formed at Shillongpatty, Silchar. At the same time missionaries also started a school at Premtala Silchar. Both the schools imparted primary and upper primary education to girls. While looking back to the Bengali society a numbers of educated Bengali males were expanded in all over Barak valley and Calcutta by doing jobs under British Government. In Cachar also there were a numbers of government servants and *Amlah*. But in opposite the wives of the middle class and high class Bengali personalities were in under the social taboos. During that time education paved the females in the right way.³¹ In Barak valley and Cachar people did not paid much attention to the education of girls and females and they mainly thinks that women had to be sit at home. The change in the status of women came when missionary schools paid attention to educating small girls. *Purdah* system was also an obstacle in the education of the girls. Anurupa Biswas in her work *Barak Upatakar Nari Jagoroner Kotha* mention that “at the end of the 19th century the female education and role of women in social activity was started in Cachar”³² With the activities of Christian missionaries and British government, Barak Valley produces a numbers of educated women in the beginning of 20th century who contributed a lot in the national movement of India. Some of them also tried to change the status of women of Cachar and Barak Valley. Among them mention may be made of Hiran Kumari Dutta who was born in 1893 and she got admitted in missionary school at Silchar and in the M.E.

31. Anurupa Biswas, *Barak Upatakar Narijagoroner Kotha*, Silchar, P.17.

32. *Ibid.* P.19.

examination she got B.T. In 1906 she was the president of women's Association. Amita Kumar Chanda was the daughter of Kamini Kumar Chanda and she was also the headmistress of Swadeshi School of Silchar. Saudamini Deb was the daughter of Kalimohon Deb was born on 1887. Her father was a nationalist and he also gave education to her. She got married with Shyamacharan Deb and in the earlier her husband work at Habinganj but in 1917 both husband and wife settled at Silchar. After coming to Silchar she started work in Junior Teacher Training School. Finally both husband and wife began to work at Silchar Mission School. Shyamacharan Dev was the arithmetic teacher and she was the teacher of primary level. We can also regard Saudamini Dev as the first teacher who got the teachers training education.³³ In 1920-21, because of the Swadeshi movement they left the school and on 1st August, 1921 Dinanath Nabakishore Swadeshi School was also established and she also began to work there. Along with the formal education the school imparted vocational education like tailoring to the girls. Jyotshna Chanda also got education from Silchar Mission Girls' School and she was also born in 30 March 1904. In 1920 she passed the primary education but there were no institution which imparted higher education to girls. During that time in entire Surma Valley only Murichand College of Sylhet imparted higher education. Finally she convinced her father and went Calcutta for higher education and got admitted in Diosession a women's college. A numbers of educated women from Barak Valley also participated in national movement of India. They tool leadership role in the freedom struggle. Amongst them Suprava Dutta, Bilangamayi Kar, Matangini Das, Suniti Bala Das, Nalini Bala Deb Cahudhuri Sardhasundari Chaudhury, Charubala Sen's names are remarkable.

33. *Ibid.* P.26.