

tributed towards a significant unification of tribes and to building up of a new Hrangkhoh identity.

4. Education

In the sphere of education, the tribal people have thrived by leaps and bound. The work of Christian mission in education is the greatest significant impact on the hill tribes. In this regard, the arrival of pioneer missionaries may be regarded as the blessings to the tribal background people. As Frederick S. Downs has rightly noted,

But the most important reason for the great impact in the hills was the act that the Government gave the Christian missions a virtual monopoly on education there.²⁴

The missionaries adopted the policy of the establishment of schools as part of their evangelistic strategy. Since the Mission station was set up in 1905 in North Cachar Hills through the effort of Rev. Gerlan Williams, several mission schools were opened in many places where the art of reading and writing was taught. In the beginning, the local people did not know the need of education. So the parents preferred their children to work in the jhum cultivation and domestic business. With the spread of Christianity, new interest in education appeared. Especially the new converts whose aim was to be able to read the scripture and hymn books. By now illiterate people are rare. At present, the Dolchhorra village obtained a high literacy among the Hrangkhohs of South Cachar.²⁵ As education developed, ethnic identity and solidarity consciousness

²⁴ Frederick S. Downs. *Christianity in North-East India: Historical Perspectives*, New Delhi, 1983, p. 273.

²⁵ Information from Mr. Lalenglawma of Dolchhorra, South Cachar, date 12th Aug., 1997.