



**STATUS OF ELEMENTARY EDUCATION IN BARAK VALLEY OF SOUTHERN ASSAM AT THE DAWN OF INDEPENDENCE**

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**ABSTRACT**

Elementary education is the foundation upon which all sorts of further education depend. The progress of a locality or a state or a nation is greatly depends on its educational development which is again based on the quality of elementary education. Since independence, the national as well as the state government initiated lot many efforts and strategies to ensure universalization of elementary education in the country, but still it become a matter of serious concern as we fails to achieve the target of UEE. Again, it is highly pertinent to look into the real scenario of basic education since the progress made so far is highly compartmentalized and exists a wide disparity between and among the different sections of population and regions of the country. However, to have a clear picture of the status of elementary education in this remote region of the state of Assam at the dawn of independence as because the progress of education in any region is highly affected by its root upon which it develops and hence the study is conducted.

**KEYWORDS** : Education, UEE, Barak Valley, Progress.

Education is the mechanism through which the transformation of human being is carried out. It is the basis for the prosperity of a nation and also a vehicle for social transformation. It is a must for nation building, modernization, political development, economic growth, and for institutionalization of political freedom. Elementary education is the foundation upon which all sorts of further education depend. The progress of a locality or a state or a nation is greatly depends on its educational development which is again based on the quality of elementary education. Since independence, the national as well as the state government initiated lot many efforts and strategies to ensure universalization of elementary education in the country, but still it become a matter of serious concern as we fails to achieve the target of UEE.

Barak Valley is the southernmost region of Indian state of Assam and is situated between Longitude 92015 and 93015 East and Latitude 2408" and 2508" North, covering an area of 6922 Square Kilometers. The region shares its borders with North Cachar Hills district and the state of Meghalaya in the North, the state of Manipur in the East; the state of Mizoram in the South; and the state of Tripura and the Sylhet district of Bangladesh in the West. Administratively, the region at present is

comprised of three districts, viz. Cachar, Karimganj and Hailakandi. Cachar is the largest district and Hailakandi is the smallest with total geographical areas of 3786 Sq. Km. and 1327 Sq. Km. respectively and area of Karimganj district is 1809 Sq. Km.

Having made the beginning in modern education, introduced by the British, some progress was made during the years preceding independence of the country in this region of the state of Assam. However, the below mentioned tables 1-6 detail the situation in 1946-47 in terms of number of various types of schools, enrolments in them and expenditure and source of funding as well as the training of teachers. It needs to be mentioned here that, this data includes the Tables for Sylhet as well which is not a part of the present Barak Valley. However, since the data for Barak Valley is not available separately for the period, this data for Surma Valley which includes Barak Valley, may give some idea about the progress made in elementary education in theregion during the period.3

Table 1 gives the details of Boys' Middle English Schools in regard to their types, enrolments and sources of funding.

**Table -1 Statistics of Boys Middle English Schools for the year 1946-47**

| Division                   | Types of schools | No. of institutions | No. of pupils |                       |                       |               | Direct expenditure (In Rupees) |               |               |                |
|----------------------------|------------------|---------------------|---------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------|--------------------------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|
|                            |                  |                     | Middle class  | Upper primary classes | Lower primary classes | Total         | Public Funds                   | Fees          | Other sources | Total          |
| Surma Valley & Hill Region | Govt.            | 2 (1.05)            | 49            | 62                    | 69                    | 180 (1.09)    | 6624                           | 864           | -             | 7488 (2.24)    |
|                            | Aided            | 150 (78.95)         | 3412          | 3072                  | 6206                  | 12840 (77.81) | 103360                         | 133147        | 26662         | 263169 (78.62) |
|                            | Un-aided         | 38 (20)             | 985           | 947                   | 1511                  | 3481 (21.09)  | 1354                           | 38910         | 23801         | 6406 (19.14)   |
|                            | All              | 190 (100)           | 4446 (26.94)  | 4081 (24.73)          | 7786 (47.19)          | 16501 (100)   | 11133 (33.26)                  | 17292 (51.66) | 50463 (15.08) | 334722 (100)   |

**Source:** Educational Tables Related to Assam, 1946-47.

This table shows that in 1946-47, there were a total 190 Middle English (M.E) Schools for Boys, out of which only 2 (1.05 %) were under Government management, 150 (78.95 %) were Aided and 38 (20 %) were Un-Aided schools in Surma Valley and Hill Region. The total number of students was 16,501 out of which 4,446 (26.94%) were in Middle Classes, 4,081 (24.73%) were in Upper Primary Classes, 7,786 (47.19%) were in Lower Primary Classes.

Again out of the total 16,501 students 180 (1.09 %) were in the Government schools, 12,840 (77.81%) were in Aided schools and 3,481 (21.09%) were in the Un-Aided schools. The total expenditure incurred during this year for Boys M.E. Schools in Surma Valley was Rs. 3,34,722 out of which Rs. 1,11,338 (33.26%) were spent from Public Exchequer, Rs. 1,72,921 (51.66 %) from Fees and Rs. 50,463 (15.08 %) from Other

sources. Again the total expenditure for Government schools was Rs. 7,488 (2.24 %), for Aided schools 2,63,169 (78.62 %) and for Un-Aided schools Rs. 64,065 (19.14%).

Table 2 gives the statistics on the Boys' Middle Vernacular schools in Surma Valley in the year 1946-47. A perusal of this table shows that in 1946-47, the total number of Middle Vernacular (M.V) schools was 95, out of which 56 (58.95%) were public schools and 39 (41.05%) were Aided schools in Surma Valley and Hill Region, there was no unaided middle school of this type. The total number of students in these schools was 10783 out of which 1,861 (17.26%) were in Middle Classes, 2,092 (19.40%) were in Upper Primary Classes, 6,830 (63.34%) were in Lower Primary Classes. Again out of the total of 16501 students 7,235 (67.10%) were in the publicly funded schools, and 3,548 (32.90%) were in the Aided schools.

**Table -2 Statistics of Boys Middle Vernacular Schools for the year 1946-47**

| Division                   | Kind of schools | No. of institutions | No. of pupils  |                       |                      |              | Direct expenditure (In Rupees) |             |               |              |
|----------------------------|-----------------|---------------------|----------------|-----------------------|----------------------|--------------|--------------------------------|-------------|---------------|--------------|
|                            |                 |                     | Middle classes | Upper primary classes | Lower primar classes | Total        | Public Funds                   | Fees        | Other sources | Total        |
| Surma Valley & Hill Region | Public          | 56 (58.95)          | 1060           | 1065                  | 5110                 | 7235 (67.10) | 88309                          | 2188        | 377           | 90872 (64.2) |
|                            | Aided           | 39 (41.05)          | 801            | 1027                  | 1720                 | 3548 (32.90) | 43066                          | 2872        | 4728          | 50666 (35.8) |
|                            | All             | 95 (100)            | 1861 (17.26)   | 2092 (19.40)          | 6830 (63.34)         | 1078 (100)   | 13137 (92.82)                  | 5060 (3.58) | 5105 (3.60)   | 14153 (100)  |

\*Figures in parenthesis indicate percentage.

Source: Educational Tables Related Assam, 1946-47.

The total expenditure incurred for Boys' M.V. Schools in Surma Valley was Rs. 1,41,538 out of which Rs. 1,31,373 (92.82%) were spent from Public Funds, Rs. 5,060 (3.60%) from Fees and Rs. 5,105 (3.60%) from Other sources. Again the total expenditure for Public schools was Rs. 90,872 (64.2%), and for Aided schools were Rs. 50,666 (35.8%).

This account regarding the Boys' M.V. Schools shows that it was mainly funded from the Government sources and other public funds like the taxes collected by Municipalities and other Boards. Private effort in this type of education was absent as there were no private un-aided Boys' M.V. Schools. The Middle Vernacular system seem to be funded mainly

(92.82%) by the Government, Municipalities and Boards, while only 3.58 % expenditure was met out of fees paid by the students and another 3.6% was met out of other sources.

In other words, the Middle Vernacular system was encouraged by the administration of the time and therefore was subsidized to the tune of about 93%.

Table 3 gives the statistics of Boys' Primary schools in terms of the number of institutions, number of students, expenditure and the sources of funding from different sources. It shows that there were total 3,653 Primary schools in 1946-47 in the Surma Valley region, out of which 2,502 (68.49%) were Public schools and 335 (9.66%) were Aided schools and 798 (21.85%) were Un-Aided schools.

**Table -3 Statistics of Boys Primary Schools for the year 1946-47**

| Division                   | Types of schools | No. of institutions | No. of pupils  | Direct expenditure |             |               |                 |
|----------------------------|------------------|---------------------|----------------|--------------------|-------------|---------------|-----------------|
|                            |                  |                     |                | Public Fund        | Fees        | Other sources | Total           |
| Surma Valley & Hill Region | Public           | 2502 (68.49)        | 136459 (73.31) | 992642             | -           | 11352         | 1003994 (82.84) |
|                            | Aided            | 353 (9.66)          | 16486 (8.86)   | 72117              | 860         | 14261         | 87238 (7.2)     |
|                            | Un-aided         | 798 (21.85)         | 33197 (17.83)  | 1786               | 548         | 119002        | 120788 (9.97)   |
|                            | All              | 3653 (100)          | 186142 (100)   | 1066545 (88)       | 1408 (0.11) | 14461 (11.93) | 1212020 (100)   |

Source: Educational Tables Related Assam, 1946-47.

The total expenditure incurred in 1946-47 for Boys Primary Schools in Surma Valley was Rs. 12,12,020, out of which Rs. 10,66,545 (88%) were spent from Public funds; Rs. 1,408 (0.11%) came from Fees; and Rs. 1,44,615 (11.93%) from other sources. Again the total expenditure for publicly funded schools was Rs. 10,03,994 (82.84%), for Aided schools it was Rs. 87,238 (7.2%) and for Un-Aided schools Rs. 1,20,788 (9.97%).

Table 4 below shows the status of Girls' Middle Vernacular schools concerning the number of schools, students, expenditure and sources of funding. A close perusal to the table shows that the total number of this category of schools in Surma Valley during 1946-47 was 13, out of which 10 (76.92%) were under Board and Municipal managements, 2 (15.38%) were Aided and 1 (7.69%) was Un-Aided.

**Table-4 Statistics of Girls Middle Vernacular Schools for the year 1946-4**

| Division                   | Kind of schools   | No. of institutions | No. of pupils  |                       |                       |             | Direct expenditure from (In Rupees) |      |               |               |
|----------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|----------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------------|-------------------------------------|------|---------------|---------------|
|                            |                   |                     | Middle classes | Upper primary classes | Lower primary classes | Total       | Public Fund                         | Fees | Other sources | Total         |
| Surma Valley & Hill Region | Board & Municipal | 10 (76.92)          | 147            | 79                    | 691                   | 917 (83.52) | 14677                               | -    | -             | 14677 (93.37) |
|                            | Aided             | 2 (15.38)           | 17             | 22                    | 105                   | 144 (13.11) | 288                                 | -    | 681           | 969 (6.16)    |
|                            | Un-aided          | 1 (7.69)            | 12             | 25                    | -                     | 37 (3.37)   | 74                                  | -    | -             | 74 (0.47)     |
|                            | All               | 13 (100)            | 176 (16.02)    | 126 (11.48)           | 796 (72.5)            | 1098 (100)  | 15039 (95.67)                       | -    | 681 (4.33)    | 15720 (100)   |

Source: Educational Tables Related Assam, 1946-47.

The total number of students was 1,098, out of which only 176 (16.02%) were in Middle Classes, 126 (11.48%) were in Upper Primary Classes and rest 796 (72.5%) were in Lower Primary Classes. Again out of the total of 1,098 students, 917 (83.52%) were in the Board and Municipal schools, 144 (13.11%) were in the Aided schools and 37 (3.37%) were in the Un-Aided schools.

Again the total expenditure for Board and Municipal schools was Rs. 14,677 (93.37%), for Aided schools Rs. 969 (6.16%) and for Un-Aided schools it was Rs. 74 (0.47%).

The total expenditure incurred in 1946-47 on Girls M.V. schools in Surma Valley was Rs. 15,720, out of which Rs. 15,039 (95.67%) were spent from Public funds, and Rs. 681 (4.33%) were from Other sources.

The primary school statistics for girls in the year 1946-47 are given in table 5. This table shows that the total number of Girls Primary schools in Surma Valley and Hill Region was 920, out of which 609 (66.2%) were under Board and Municipal managements, 77 (8.37%) were Aided and 234 (25.43%) were Un-Aided. The total number of students was 32,686, out of which 22,160 (67.8%) were in the Board and Municipal schools, 3,213 (9.82%) were in the Aided schools and 7,313 (22.59%) were in the Un-Aided schools.

**Table -5 Statistics of Girls Primary Schools for the year 1946-47**

| Division                   | Kind of schools | No. of institutions | No. of pupils | Direct expenditure from (In Rupees) |      |               |                |
|----------------------------|-----------------|---------------------|---------------|-------------------------------------|------|---------------|----------------|
|                            |                 |                     |               | Govt. fund                          | Fees | Other sources | Total          |
| Surma Valley & Hill Region | Board & Muni    | 609 (66.2)          | 22160 (67.8)  | 168922                              | -    | 1623          | 170545 (82.38) |

|  |          |             |              |                |            |              |              |
|--|----------|-------------|--------------|----------------|------------|--------------|--------------|
|  | Aided    | 77 (8.37)   | 3213 (9.82)  | 26887          | -          | 2083         | 28970 (14)   |
|  | Un-aided | 234 (25.43) | 7313 (22.59) | 168            | -          | 7339         | 7507 (3.63)  |
|  | All      | 920 (100)   | 32686 (100)  | 195977 (94.58) | 156 (0.08) | 11045 (5.34) | 207022 (100) |

Source: Educational Tables Related Assam, 1946-47.

The total expenditure incurred in 1946-47 for Girls Primary schools in Surma Valley were Rs.2,07,022 out of which Rs. 1,95,977 (94.58%) were spent from Public fund, Rs. 156 (0.08%) were from Fees, and Rs. 11,045 (5.34%) were from other sources. Again the total expenditure for Board and Municipal schools were Rs.1,70,545 (82.38%), for Aided schools Rs. 28,970 (14%) and for Un-Aided schools Rs.7,507 (3.63%).

The training of teachers' was also a concern for the British administrators during the years preceding independence, as is shown in table 6. The table shows the number of training schools, their enrolments and sources of funding. Thus, there were 7 training schools in Surma Valley and Hill Region in 1946-47, out of which one was under Government management and the other 6 were aided.

The total number of students (trainees) in these institutes was 228, out of which 104 were in the Government institute and the rest of them were in the Aided schools.

**Table-6**  
**Statistic of Training Schools for the year 1946-47**

| Division                   | Types of institutions | No. of institutions | No. of pupils | Expenditure (In Rupees) | Cost per pupil |                                       |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|---------------|-------------------------|----------------|---------------------------------------|
|                            |                       |                     |               |                         | Govt. Fund     | To Govt. fund<br>Total cost per pupil |
| Surma Valley & Hill Region | Govt.                 | 1                   | 104 (45.61)   | 34270 (80.21)           | 329            | 329                                   |
|                            | Aided                 | 6                   | 124 (54.39)   | 8457 (19.79)            | 68             | 68                                    |
|                            | All                   | 7                   | 228 (100)     | 42727 (100)             | 397            | 397                                   |

Source: Educational Tables Related Assam, 1946-47.

As regards the expenditure, the total expenditure incurred was Rs. 42,727, out of which Rs. 34,270 (80.21%) was spent for Government institution and Rs. 8,457 (19.79%) only was spent on Aided institutions. Again, the expenditure per pupil for the Government institute was Rs. 329, whereas the cost per pupils for an Aided institute was Rs. 68 only. The number of students and per pupil cost in the two types of institutes shows that the students preferred to attend the government training schools.

**Conclusion:**

Therefore, the discussion made above leads us to the following findings regarding the status of elementary education in Barak Valley at the dawn of independence:

1. The state efforts in Middle English (ME) Schools were nominal and it was mainly the efforts of the people themselves who took initiatives in providing this type of education to their children. The state supported the system by providing aid as is shown by the fact that the aided and un-aided schools formed 98.95% of all schools and incurred 97.7% of the total expenditure on M.E. Schools. While 51.66% expenditure was met out of the fees collected from students, 15.08% of the expenditure was met out of other sources and the Government Board and Municipalities funded 33.26% of the total expenditure. This shows that M.E stage of education was essentially a privately funded affair.
2. The account regarding the Boys' M.V. Schools shows that it was mainly funded from the Government sources and other public funds like the taxes collected by Municipalities and other Boards. Private effort in this type of education was absent as there were no private un-aided Boys' M.V. Schools. The Middle Vernacular system seems to be funded mainly (92.82%) by the Government, Municipalities and Boards, while only 3.58% expenditure was met out of fees paid by the students and another 3.6% was met out of other sources. In other words, the Middle Vernacular system was

encouraged by the administration of the time and therefore was subsidized to the tune of about 93%.

3. However, a comparison of both the data of Boys' Middle English Schools with Middle Vernacular schools shows that the former type of schools was more than double the number of the latter type and that while there were 21% un-aided M.E. Schools, there were no unaided M.V. type Schools. This shows that there was a greater demand for English education and those who could afford did not hesitate paying for it. The majority of the children of the masses did not go to school at all and a few who belonged to families slightly better off economically preferred Vernacular medium schools where they had to pay very little fees as the vernacular education was highly subsidized, almost free. Thus, the employment opportunities in the offices run by the British were accessible only to those who were already well off economically and could afford pay for their English education, while those who could not afford this luxury were condemned to vernacular education with no or very lowly paid employment opportunities.
4. It was found that most of the Boys Primary schools (68.49%) were publicly managed which enrolled about 73.31% of the students. Only 9.66% schools were aided while 21.85% were un-aided with 8.86% and 17.83% enrolments respectively. As far as the funding for this stage of education is concerned, the Government and Local Authority met about 88% of the expenses while about 12% expenditure was met from other sources. Fees collected from the students were just 0.11%. Thus, one can safely say that the primary education during this period was provided free for all boys.
5. The data shows that, there were no direct Government Vernacular schools for girls during this period. The education of the girls was not treated equally as that of the boys. This is clear from the fact that there were no Middle English schools for girls in this region even at the dawn of independence. The majority (76.92%) of this type of school was under Board and Municipal management and rest were aided and un-aided. The expenditure incurred for this type of schools reveals that Government funded 28.24% whereas Board and Municipality funded 67.43% and 4.33% expenditure was met from other sources. There were no fee contributions to this type of education. This shows that this stage of education for girls was totally free. It may be mentioned here that there were no Middle English schools in the region, neither public nor private, for girls still 1947, which implies that the education of girls was not thought to be important the fact being supported by the other fact that even in M.V Category there were only 13 schools for girls with a total enrolment of 1572 only. Again, it shows that girls did not educate to seek employment in the government where knowledge of English was required.

The statistics on girls' primary education shows that education of the girls was mainly the state concern as is reflected from the funding pattern which shows that about 95% funding came from Public funds and only about 5% from other sources. Again, it can be safely said that the primary education of the girls during this period was almost free. The government subsidized the major expenditure for it. Thus, while the local people especially those who were well off, did not like sending daughters outside their homes for education, the British administration made an effort to encourage girls to go to school, even though only of the vernacular type.

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