

CONGREGATION OF OUR LADY OF THE MISSIONS

North East India Province

The RNDM presence in the North East is in two States of Assam and Meghalaya.

North East India has often been called one of the most fertile or responsive mission fields of the Church in India. It is estimated that there is a population of 32 million people living in North-East India; about 9.1 million or 28.4% of the people are Tribal.

This region of India consists of eight States: Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura and Sikkim, each one embracing its own rich and varied cultures and traditions. The people of these States are lively, jovial and hospitable.



Meghalaya – Our First Visit

Meghalaya, a hilly strip in North Eastern India, covers a total area of just 22,429 sq km. Originally a part of Assam, it has the 7 districts in the **Khasi, Jaintia** and **Garo** hills. Meghalaya—literally known as the "Abode (alaya) of the Clouds (megha)"--occupies a mountainous plateau of great scenic beauty where the average elevation is just less than 2000 m (6500 ft). One of the wettest regions on earth, Cherrapunji lies 56 km from Shillong, the capital city.



The climate of Meghalaya is generally mild. In August the temperature at Shillong (in the 2 Khasi Hills) is 70° F (21° C); it falls to 49° F (9.5° C) and below in January.

History: The Khasi, Jaintia, and Garo tribes, each had their own kingdoms until the British annexed them in the 19th century. After the Independence in 1947, Meghalaya was accorded autonomous status within the state of Assam. Meghalaya became a full-fledged state in 1972.

Society and Culture: The original inhabitants of Jaintias and Garos who are common cultural tradition Meghalaya is the inheritance of title and of its kind in the country. attire and rich in cultural



Jaintia Dance



Khasi Dance

this state are Khasis, tribal groups. A of all the tribes of matrilineal practice of property, which is one All the communities are unique in their traditional dances.

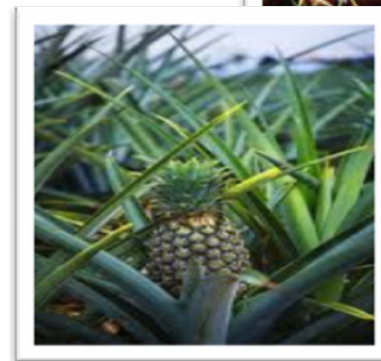
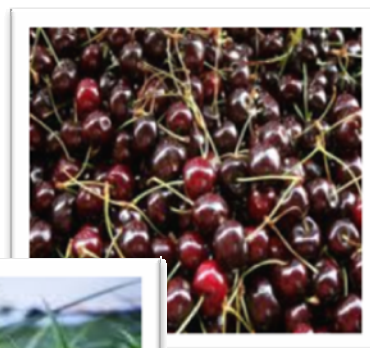


Garo Dance

Economy and Infrastructure: Meghalaya has abundant but untapped natural resources. The state does

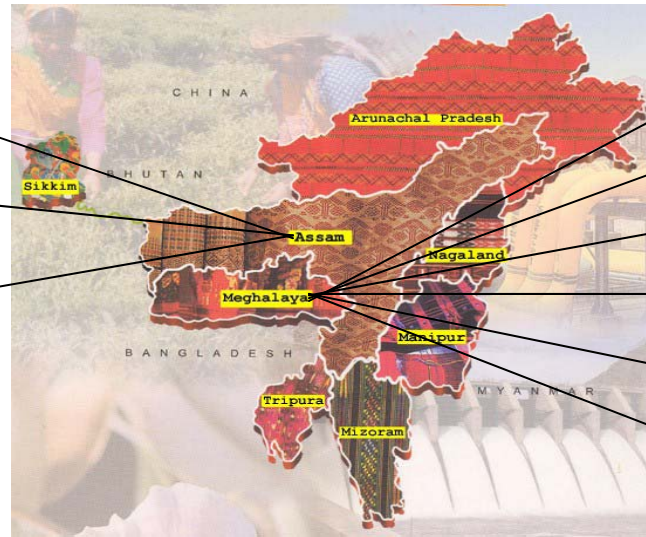


not have any heavy industry; small-scale industries include cement, plywood and beverage factories. Important fruits grown here are oranges, pineapple, lemon, guava, jackfruit and bananas, while potato, jute, mesta, cotton, arecanut, ginger, turmeric, betel leaf and black pepper. 'Jhum' or the shifting system of cultivation is being replaced with scientific methods, bringing land under permanent cultivation. Forest resources from pine and



other timber products bring in the major chunk of state revenue.

Capital	Shillong
Area	22, 720 Sq.Km
Population	2,964,007 in 2011
Principal Languages	Khasi, Pnar, Garo and English is the official language
Number of Villages	5629
Literacy rate	72.1%
Ratio of urban population	2,67,881
Forest Area	8510 Sq,Km
Density	130.5/ Per Sq.Km
Major Religion	Christianity
International Dialing	91



St. Agnes Haflong 1918

Dona Maria, Guwahati 2005

Maria Bhavan, Kahilipara, 2011

St. Mary's Shillong 1915

St. John Bosco's, Cherrapunji 1938

St. Joseph's, Jaiaw 1943

St. Michael's, Umsning 1971

U Krist Jingshai, Marbisu 1979

Euphrasie Babier, Tluh 1999



THE BIRTH OF THE NORTH EAST INDIA PROVINCE

The first Christian missionaries to come to North-East India were the Calvinistic Protestants from Wales in 1840. Fifty years later in 1890 the German Catholic missionaries of the Congregation of the Divine Saviour (Salvatorians) set foot on the Khasi Hills. Their arrival marked the coming of the Catholic Church to the Region. In 1915, one year after the outbreak of World War I, the British Government ordered the expulsion of all German Nationals. First, the German Salvatorian priests and brothers were interned and the Sisters were ordered to hold themselves ready for repatriation. Fr. Paul Lefebvre S.J. was sent immediately from Calcutta as administrator of the Assam Mission. Desperate for helpers, he wrote a letter to the RNDM Vicar in Chittagong making an earnest appeal to send sisters to help him in his hour of need.



St. Mary's in earliest days

The RNDM Sisters responded and arrived in Shillong on 15th November 1915 after a long and tedious journey from Chittagong and took over the mission at St. Mary's, Shillong.

With the kind of dedication and commitment from the RNDM missionaries who arrived through hardships in 1915, the mission in the North East has grown to the present status involving ourselves widely in education and empowerment of the female section of the society besides our pastoral activities as part of a strong Church in this part of the world. The missionaries laid a strong foundation on which our activities stand today.

The one Indian Province grew and in 1995 three vice-provinces South, Centre and North were formed. In 2000 the three became full-fledged Provinces and today we have India South Province, India Centre Province and India North East Province. The Provincialate of India North East Province is in St. Joseph's Convent.



St. Mary's orphans

CONVENTS AND PRESENT MINISTRY INVOLVEMENTS

St. Mary's Convent (1915)

St. Mary's is the oldest establishment of our missions in Meghalaya. The first RNDM Sisters who came to the North East were M.St.Dionysius, M. St. Bertille of Jesus, M. St. Ernestine and Mother Mary Jesus Adolescent, who were brought by M. M. Eucharistie, the Mother Vicar. They inherited 42 orphans, a primary school of over 100 children, a dispensary and a refuge for old people.

Education: Today St. Mary's Convent is a vast complex comprising the Lower Primary School with Khasi as the medium of instruction and caters to the lower income group. A study centre for National Institute of Open School (NIOS) for school dropouts is attached to the School.

The Montessori Section is also a Lower Primary School opened in 1944 catering to the middle income group.

St. Mary's Campus runs educational institutions upto the Graduate level of education through St. Mary's English School, St. Mary's Higher Secondary School and St. Mary's Degree College. St. Mary's College of Teacher Education is a professional College for teacher education

Pastoral: Family Prayer meetings, counseling, visiting families, preparing people for the sacraments, jail ministry and youth ministry.

Social Work: Women for Integrated Sustainable Empowerment (WISE) involved in Social Work for girl dropouts, unwed mothers, and women in difficult circumstances, acts as the social wing of the province. WISE today has grown into a full-pledged NGO empowering the female section of the society for a sustainable living.

The Orphanage has more than 100 orphans and children of single parents who are given quality care and education and prepared for life.

The College hostel for girls caters for girls from rural areas.

Aspirants: Young girls who have completed their Class X exams and desiring to join the Congregation are accepted here to study for the 10 + 2.

Student Sisters from the South and Central Provinces and Bangladesh are provided with the opportunities to pursue studies at higher levels here.



Sr. Biola addressing the Aspirants



Orphan Children at St. Mary's

St. Joseph's Convent (1943)

Provincialate

St. Joseph's is located at Jaiaw, then a village; now part of Shillong town. Bishop Stephan Ferrando invited the RNDMS to begin a school and take care of the spiritual life of the Catholics who were living in the area.

Education: St. Joseph's Lower Primary School with Khasi as medium of instruction, an English School, and a Higher Secondary School are the educational institutions being looked after by the sisters.

Pastoral: Sisters are also involved in the Parish activities – teaching Catechism, preparing children for the Sacraments, visiting families and the sick and being members of the Parish Council.



Family Visits



Postulants reaping their harvest



The Postulants on a trip with Sr. Leena, Directress

Postulants: The Postulancy for the three Indian Provinces is held at St. Joseph's.

St. John Bosco Convent (1937)

Cherrapunji

Cherrapunji, 56 km South of Shillong and well known as one of the rainiest places in the world.

It is a very beautiful place with green hills and enchanting waterfalls and beautiful caves.



Children from the orphanage at work

Our Sisters were invited to Cherrapunji by Bishop Stephan Ferrando to open a school for the poor children of the *Ri War*. The Orphanage was opened immediately followed by a tailoring school and a dispensary. Later a weaving department was added to help the poor girls and women to earn a livelihood. The present work of the Sisters is providing education along with free boarding and lodging for those who are financially weak.

Education: Our Sisters run a Lower Primary School and a Secondary School.

Pastoral: The Sisters are members of the Parish Council. Teaching of Catechism on Sundays and preparing children for the reception of the Sacraments are important duties of the sisters. Touring of the interior villages of the Parish is carried out by two sisters, accompanied by the catechist to prepare people for Sacraments and for faith formation. Family visits in the locality and animating various associations in the parish are also carried out.



One of the enchanting water falls



One of the cultural programmes during the Platinum Jubilee Celebrations

St. Michael's Convent (1971)

Umsning

Umsning is to the North of Shillong in the Ri-Bhoi District. The National Highway (NH 40) passes through it, linking Shillong to Guwahati and then to the rest of country.

St. Michael's Convent was begun at the invitation of Fr. Michael Balawan SDB, the founder of St. Michael's School.

Education: The present work of the Sisters is assisting the Parish Priest in running the Parish Higher Secondary School which is co – educational. Our sisters are also assisting in the Lower Primary School and in the English Medium school. The supervision of these schools is carried out by the sisters. The sisters also run a hostel for the children of the weaker section.

Pastoral: The Sisters are actively involved in Sunday Catechism, preparing children for the Sacraments, touring the villages during winter vacation for faith formation and regular visit to families. One of the sisters teaches in the minor seminary.

U Krist Jingshai Convent (1979)

Marbisu

In 1977 Archbishop Hubert D'Rosario SDB established a Junior Teachers' Training and Catechist Training Centre at Marbisu, 22 kms from Shillong. He invited the RNDM Sisters in 1979 to help run the Lum Jingshai Training Centre. Hundreds of catechists and lay leaders had been trained there. They now carry on the work of evangelization and faith-formation in rural areas.



Sr Marie Therese greeted by the children from the hostel

Education: The Sisters are engaged in the Parish School teaching and assisting with the administration and care of the girls in the hostel.

Pastoral: Our Sisters are involved in touring of villages for faith formation and preparation for Sacraments, supervising teaching of Catechism in village schools, visiting families, conducting seminars and retreats for different groups in the Parish.

Health: The dispensary serves a large number of poor people. The services rendered are unique with Allopathic, Homeo and Ayurvedic medicines in use. The dispensary is noted for treatment of patients suffering from asthma, gastritis, whooping cough, skin-disease, tapeworm, roundworm, and white patches.

The Sisters at U Krist Jingshai Convent collaborates with Sacred Heart Theological College, Mawlai, Shillong in taking care of children affected with rickets. The children are treated in our dispensary. Home care of elderly people is an important part of the ministry. The sisters have taken initiatives to train health care workers to survey areas of under nourished children in the surrounding villages.



Sr John Baptist with patients in the dispensary

Euphrasie Barbier Convent (1999)

Tluh

This village is located in the remote east of the Jaintia Hills District about 150 kms from Shillong, the capital of the State of Meghalaya. We came here at the request of the village and the invitation of Late Archbishop T. Resto Phanrang, SDB.

Education: We took over charge of the existing Primary and Secondary Schools. Later, hostellers were taken in to help the poor children from distant areas to receive the benefits of education.



Pastoral: Our sisters are involved in family visits, youth ministry, animation of Catholic Associations, prayer groups and Sunday Catechism.

The community sisters

St. Agnes' Convent (1918)

Haflong, Assam



The community sisters

Haflong is the only hill station of Assam and the headquarters of Dima Hasao, North Cachar Hills. The town lies at an altitude of 3,000 ft. above sea level and is noted for its beauty and grandeur.

The original intention of opening a Convent in Haflong was to provide a sanatorium for the sisters worn out in the heat of the plains. In 1918 St. Agnes Convent became a reality with the commencement of a hostel. There were 35 hostellers and they formed the nucleus of the school. The School is one of the best in the District and its students rank among the top position holders in the Assam Board Secondary Education. We work among twenty- nine different linguistic groups of people. Due to the different ethnic groups frequent clashes occur. The challenge for us is creating a happy co-existence among

the groups.

Education – Our primary work here is education from Nursery to Secondary School Level, Sunday Catechism, visiting families, running a Hostel for poor tribal girls, pastoral care and parish activities.

Dona Maria Convent (2005)

Guwahati, Assam



The scouts at St. Agnes' High School



The community members and Sr Mary Candida with little children

Kahilipara, Guwahati, Assam

Guwahati is the largest city in India North – East and serves as the gateway to the North East. With its hospitals and diagnostic testing facilities which are among the best in the region.

Dona Maria serves as a transit house for the Province. The Convent gives sick Sisters the opportunity to be treated at the hospitals. The Sisters are tutoring children in English. They are also involved in Sunday Catechism, informal adult education, social work of training women in tailoring and flower-making and visits to families.

Maria Bhavan (2011)

Kahilipara, is the latest acquisition. It lies to the south of Guwahati. The medical facilities are within easy reach from this place and therefore, beneficial to avail quality medical facilities. At present the sisters are familiarizing themselves with the people through home visits. They teach Catechism on Sundays and animate youth groups in the parish.



The Inauguration of the RNDM Associates

Associates: INE has formed Associates known as ‘Our Lady of the Missions Association’ (OLMA) on 16th July 2010 to collaborate with the RNDMs in their missions. The Association is a registered body under the Meghalaya Societies Registration Act XXI of 1983.

Over the past one year OLMA has helped support a village school financially and conducted health programmes in Thynroit a remote village of the Khasi Hills.

Websites of Institutions:

St. Mary's College of Teacher Education, Shillong - www.smcte.ac.in

St. Mary's College, Shillong - www.smcs.ac.in

Postal Address:

Provincialate

St. Joseph's Convent, Jaiaw Laitdom

Shillong 793002, E. Khasi Hills- Meghalaya

Provincial Secretary: prosecrndm2011@rediffmail.com



PASTORAL MINISTRY



HEALTH MINISTRY



SOCIAL MINISTRY



ASSOCIATES – ANNUAL GENERAL MEET



Photo Glimpse of Provincial Assembly



