

CHAPTER: I

INTRODUCTION

The society is formed by the composition of both men and women. They have their own division of duties and roles to play.¹ Throughout history, women remained in a significant position contributing to the growth and development of a particular society. From ancient to modern women constitute half of the population. They are considered as an integral part in the formation of society. However, their status, roles, and rights in the society were not counted and lay far below recognition in most of the society of human history.² Sometimes women were means only to serve men domestically, personally and socially. James Mill, a renowned Scottish historian, economist, political theorist and philosopher, said “Condition of women in a society is an index of its place in civilization”.³ Women composed almost half of the total population, of the world but mostly they were deprived of their legitimate rights in the workforce wages, education, political participation, socio-economic privileges and as well as in the field of religion and so on.

Women played a significant role in the growth and development of the society. But the society observed them as incapable of doing things on the ground of gender based issues. Almost in every society the gender deferential was found regarding women’s incompetency. To achieve human development, it is indeed necessary to acknowledge women’s rights and duties in the context of socio-economic and cultural aspects. To make broader sense of measures for the socio- economic progress of a particular society as well as in nation building,⁴ the acceptance of equal identification of women’s right are required. No doubt, differentiation varies from society to society based on time and system passed from one generation to other.⁵ Thus it is highly important to examine the status, role and rights of women of any particular society on equal footing acknowledging them that they too have an important role in building of the society. So, the contribution of women, their status, roles and duties in the society are needed to be studied properly.

Assam is a land of different tribes belonging to various ethnic and linguistic backgrounds with distinct culture and identity of their own.⁶ Among them, Bodo are considered as the original settlers of this region especially in Assam.⁷ They are also believed to be the earliest settlers having rich culture associated with the geographical dimension in Assam.⁸ Bodo women play a significant role in the socio-economic aspects of the society however their contribution is not discussed much in depth by many scholars.⁹

The establishment of colonial rule in India brought major changes not only in the administrative areas but also socially, culturally, educationally, economically and politically. The influential policy of the British had brought a huge reformation in the society amongst the different tribal societies of North East India including Assam. Also it marked the beginning of socio-economic development, cultural and religious reformation throughout the nation as well as in Bodo majority areas which have later emerged as the main factor for social reformation. Perhaps the major issue that has drawn an attention is the focus on women's status, roles and rights in the society in the post colonial period.

In Bodo society *patriarchal*¹⁰ system prevails with a character of patriliney.¹¹ In such a social domain Bodo women discharge their duty of being mother, wife, as daughter-in-law in the management of domestic schedule and socio-economic activities in the family. However, in the later colonial period the positions and rights of women were little discarded. The colonial administrators treated the tribal people as 'isolates', 'warlike', and 'savage'.¹² But somehow better responses are being witnessed in the post colonial period in a notable way.

Bodo people share common socio-cultural system almost everywhere even though they have resided in different geographical area in Assam.¹³ They have a mythical ancestor of tribal features, nature and characters.¹⁴ Also Bodo people living in different places have shared common blood relationship, language and cultural identity since ages. The women in the society also share a significant contribution throughout the ages which requires more study, particularly to identify Bodo women in the society in broader aspects.

1.1 Historical sketch of the Bodos

Bodos are an ethnic tribal community in North East India, found particularly in the state of Assam.¹⁵ The glorious past of the Bodos is known to many scholars and they considered the Bodos as one of the earliest inhabitants having the ruling dynasty with powerful kingdom at Dimapur, Maibong and Kaspur respectively at one point of time.¹⁶ B.H. Hudgson used the term '*Bodo*' on the '*Meche*' people of North Eastern Bengal Province in his book called '*Boro Grammar*' which was published in 1859.¹⁷ Rev. H.L. in his Book '*A short History of Meche or Boro language*' published in 1889 also mentioned the word '*Boro*'. We find that sir Edward Gait also make connotation of the word '*Bodo*' to the '*Bodo*' word mentioned by B.H.Hudgson.¹⁸ The use of '*Bodo*' term was also agreed by Mohini Mohan Brahma that derived from the '*Tipperah*' word '*Borok*' which means the people who speak the '*Bodo*' language.¹⁹ Wolfenden was also of the opinion that the word '*Bodo*' was known as '*Brogpa*' that assumed the word '*Barafisa*' which was derived from '*hbrog-bu-tsa*, the earliest descendent from Steppes.²⁰ G.A Grierson also described as '*Boro*' to the people of this Tibeto-Burman language speaking community.²¹ But the Bodo speaking people call themselves as '*Boro*'. There is a controversy regarding the nomenclature of the Bodo tribe as they were known with different names and terms according to the geographical features and location they belong to.

The Tibeto-Burman people were predominantly found in the entire North Eastern Region of India. The Bodos too were considered as one of its family stock. Since, then the '*Bodo*' term has been used to name the sub tribes of a certain mongoloid stock. The majority of the Bodo are living to the North Bank of the Brahmaputra River, North Bengal and as well as over East Bengal forming a solid line in the north eastern India.²²

Besides this, many scholars have mentioned that the Bodos are the descendents Mongoloids races who were originally settlers of a country to the north of the Himalayas, like China, Tibet etc.²³ Endle in his book '*The Kacharis*' called them as '*Kachari*' and traced their original home to Tibet and China from where they migrated to Assam in different waves.²⁴

The Bodos living outside Assam are also considered to be the Tibeto-Burman Linguistic group of the great Mongoloid stock. They are identified as *Kiratas* of the epic and the Vedic age belonged to the people of the mongoloid race as described by Suniti Kumar Chatterjee.²⁵ Further, few authors and writers like B.K Kakati, P.C Bhattacharya, Bhaben Narzi²⁶ were also of the view that the Bodos are the descendents of the Mongoloids. Bakul Chandra Basumatary was of the belief that the Bodos were Mogoloids, basically originated from the *Kiratas* and *Cinas*.²⁷

The *Bodos* possessed their own unique cultural identity with their political and geographical historical background. E.A Gait mentioned that the only trustworthy information regarding the origin of *Kachari* can be relied on the content of the Assam *Buranjis*, which narrated the waging of war between *Ahom* and *Kachari* in the early period.²⁸ Thus, it is learned from the fact that before the advent of the Ahoms, the *Bodos/ Kachari* had been considerably ruling the whole of Brahmaputra valley (ancient Kamrupa). As justified by many scholars various rivers' names are apparently found in a Bodos term, where 'di' means water. The names of the rivers in Assam starting with the prefix like *Dibru, Dihing, Diku, Dikhou, Dihing, Dikrang, Dihang, Dibang, Dimu, Disang, Dimapur, Digaru* etc are believed to be of *Bodo* origin.²⁹

The *kacharis / Bodo* people had also a considerable knowledgeable of using the burned bricks to construct their city and houses for building purposes. Such was the fact that even this idea was unknown to the Ahoms people whose building materials were made with timber or bamboo and mud plastered walls.³⁰ They have their own way of social strata and technique in the construction of houses as per their traditional beliefs.

The historical basis of the cultural identity the *Bodo / kachari* people affirms their own traditional faith, language and cultures. As the *Bodo* people mostly live in close proximity to the nature their social life is born with the nature's characters. The history of the *Bodos* were mainly rely on the construction of oral history, tales, songs, legends, proverbs, myths and mythology of the ancient time.³¹ Traditional religion is known as *Bathou*. They worship *Bwrai Bathou* (*Bwrai*- old God Father). In the

eighteenth century the cultural assimilation of the *Bodos* started within the royal family. The conversion of *Kachari* king, Raja Krishna Chandra and his brother Gobinda Chandra is known to us, as a sign of conversion as both entered the body of a copper effigy of a cow as a ritual of proclaiming themselves to be Hindu as mentioned by Gait.³² But it is clear from the fact that even though the royal family assimilated into Hinduism, the common Bodo people refrained from its influence. They remained attached to their traditional faith and customs. However the finding shows that some sections of the *kacharis* abandoned their tribal culture and traditional faith in favour of Hinduism anyway the majority retained and continue social life their own aged old cultural identity as Bodos down through the ages.

The Bodos maintained their own traditional and cultural dogma which shows that the Bodos have rich cultural ethics in the society. From the study it is also revealed that the folktales and beliefs of the Bodos have a long connection with the scientific ecological concept since ancient time. Thus, the Bodo people called on *Annan Gosai*³³, the creator of the universe to keep ecology attached to all the living beings on earth.³⁴ Therefore, based on such illustration of the philosophical idea on the scientific ecological concept made clear indication of the Bodos that the human beings including creatures make some evolutionary theory with a hurl that have been handed down from generation to generation. So this phenomenal mythological existence of the Bodos by a different scholars have concluded that an overview origin and these theories are also been agreed by many Bodo scholars like Dr. Kameswar Brahma, Dr Anil Boro, Medhini Choudhury, Premalata Devi, and Kumud Ranjan Basumatary.³⁵ While touching the ancestral history of the origin of *Bodos* in the North Eastern part of India. When we go through the historical fact, it is further concluded by different writers that the *Bodo* people had their own kingdom in North East India since the earliest time which was known as Pragjyotispur,³⁶ the earliest name of Assam.³⁷ Later, the *Bodos* continued to rule the kingdom by different names and ruling dynasties like *Asura* dynasty, the *kirata* dynasty, the *Varman* dynasty (from 350CE onwards),³⁸ Kamrupa³⁹, the *Salasthamba* dynasty (from 650-800CE),⁴⁰ the *Pralamba* dynasty (900-1000CE), the *Pala* dynasty (from 1000CE onwards),⁴¹ and the *Kachari* rule or *kachari* dynasty begins and lasted till the colonial period.⁴²

At present the *Bodos* are widely spread in Assam, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, Tripura, West Bengal, Nepal and Bangladesh. *Bodos* in Assam has more significant tribal communities living than tribal people in other parts of India. In the North-Eastern India in the state of Assam they are known as ‘*Bodo*’ or ‘*Boro*’.⁴³

In the present context, the *Bodos* remain as an advanced tribe and an ethnicity and linguistic minority within the union of India and classified as one of the Plains Tribal of Assam. The British regime chose to follow the former defining the *Bodo* people as distinct groups within the Indian society.⁴⁴ The policy was adopted for the *Bodos* during colonial British India; hence they are categorized as ‘Scheduled Tribe’ under the Indian constitutional provision act.⁴⁵ Thus, in the light of history, the *Bodo* people continue to fight for their separate homeland for the greater interest of the socio-economic and political development in their society within the Indian constitutional provisions. There has been somehow progress as witnessed by the signing of three consecutive accords -BAC, BTC and now BTR with the Government of India and the Bodo leaders.

1.2.1 Women in India: An overview

India is a country where different multi-tribes and multi-cultural societies exist. It is a land that does follow different ethnic customs and traditions and multi religious practices are found. By other countries, India is known as a land of gods and goddesses. Indian civilization has been known to the outside world since the Indus valley civilization, which provides the history of the finest urban societies and cultures. The culture in India is so diverse and colourful that their customs, traditions and beliefs are the main components of the culture. Many religious scripts and texts assert that there was no distinct division of work between men and women in the age-old traditions once that was in India. Therefore, many religious books don’t even indicate that men are superior to women. *Strichavisesat*⁴⁶ (scripture does not discriminate between men and women); *samskaro hi atmanisamvaiti, nastrainampaurusamvavivhagamapekshate* (it makes no distinction between men and women).⁴⁷ Women are truly an ideal form that they are mothers and sustainer of life.

It is said that women in the Vedic civilization shared equal status with men and participated in all spheres of life.⁴⁸ Women were considered men's best friend and were never an inferior to men. Women are mostly engaged in domestic, social and spiritual spheres. Womanhood in India implies the purity, inner worth and breadth for the outer expansion of the worth.⁴⁹ In the ancient Indian context Indian woman has been recognized in two main perceptions, viz. *brahmavadini* and *sadyovadhu*. A *brahmavadini* is an ascetic having highest philosophical knowledge of truth while the *Sadyovadhu* deals with the domestic welfare of the family, spending mostly her time in looking after the family and other associated chores in the family.⁵⁰ The position of women in the Vedic period enjoyed equality with men. They acquired an important place in social and religious life. There were no records in the Rig Vedic that women were being secluded from the festival gathering.⁵¹ Social system like the purdah and sati were not found during that time. Women had right to educations in the ancient time which have been clearly mentioned by different historian.⁵² The status of women was never neglected in the social and cultural aspects; they took part in dances, performed religious rituals without any restrictions.

The social system in India mostly indicates that the society is patriarchal in nature. Usually there is an existence of marrying only one wife or husband except some kings. The word *dampati* was used for the mistress of the house; therefore women attained high respect in the society in the Vedic civilization.⁵³ Women divinity was an outstanding feature in the Hindu mythology, which also attained a very high position during Vedic age. Women are sometimes called as *Lakshmi* or *Devi*, this means women are worshipped as goddesses and they have been given such a high respect that they are called *Devi* (which means goddess in *Sanskritised* word).⁵⁴ So during that period many goddess names and rivers evolved like *Saraswati*, *Shakti*, *Kali*, *Indra* etc.⁵⁵ It is mentioned that the position of women in the Vedic age was very high. A man after marrying his wife jointly offers a prayer to Almighty and both seated at the sacrificial place and offer a prayer.⁵⁶ The *Taittiriya Brahmanas* declared that an unmarried man cannot do sacrificial rites and the wives were known as *patni* because of their participation in the sacrificial.⁵⁷ However, later, women were assigned to care for the family and look after their children, associated with the

domestic chores, with so much so that women became dependent on men. Women used precious metals and ornaments as a love to beautify themselves. They were the mainstay in domestic life and a source of happiness or sometimes called as *Lakshmi*⁵⁸ a good fortune for the family. In the Vedic period women never get married unless attained the age of puberty.⁵⁹

In ancient Indian history, the position and status of women slightly changed. Widow re-marriage was not encouraged. As regard the general treatment of women, even when they conceived by adultery, they were not outcasts. Later the religious texts like *Purana* and *Smritis* condemned women for their moral lapses.⁶⁰ During that period the independent status was not found much. Till the 12th century, the property of a person went to the crown when the family had no male heir. Later the king, *Chalukya Kumarapala* of Gujarat abolished that custom and allowed the sonless widow to inherit their husband's property.⁶¹ During the later Vedic civilization little change can be traced with regard to the status of women. There was hardly any improvement in the women's positions. Daughters were regarded as a source of misery. Women could not go to the tribal assemblies. Women who were married often suffered from the fight amongst the other wives. Education was somehow received as high value in this period too.⁶²

In the medieval period the Indian society underwent several changes, especially in domestic and social life. The emergence of a new system was also witnessed in the medieval Indian period. Many women sacrificed bravery during that period. So in the medieval period the advent of the Muslims and the challenges of the Islamic cultures had been new dimensions in the traditional Indian society. The medieval period was of Muslims like Turks, Afghans and Mughals, who ruled and dominated India at one point of time. It was during that period that the laws relating to women contented with many changes in respect to marriage, position, status, rights etc. Women did not have such a privilege to be able to exercise their property right.⁶³ The ideal of companionship for the married women had no choice of friendship outside but had to look within their married counterpart. During the Mughal period, the history says that there were many women who participated in the administration like *Gubadan Begum*, *Hamidah Bano*, *Nur Jahan*, *Mumtaz Mahal*, *Jahanara*, *Rani*

Lakshimai of Jhansi, Razia Sultana but all of them were in the limelight for a short period.⁶⁴ Sometimes ladies of the Mughal court performed stronger in handling the power but did not last long because of being women. They received so many objections in this matter.⁶⁵ In the medieval period as Indian society crept into a number of evil customs and traditions for which the position of women in the society deteriorated.⁶⁶ Such system prevailed due to the cultural influences between Muslims and Hindus. Such evil practices were found more in Hindu society.⁶⁷ The other social practices were like young men marrying old women, dowry system and sati. The Purdah systems were socially opposing to women's position during the medieval period. Besides these systems, Polygamy, Child marriage, Female child infanticide, *Sati*, *Dowry* etc were the major social issues. Deprivation in education and property rights were major social issues. The practice of prostitution was also found in Indian society as a whole.⁶⁸ Widow re-marriage was encouraged in the Muslim society, but Hindu had some restriction. Akbar also did not make compulsory on this system even though he declared it as lawful.⁶⁹ During the Mughal period the position of women was quite subordinate to men, their function and position was always associated with male dependence.⁷⁰ The position of women in the early British period was not satisfactory; it was implicated with so many social issues in the society.⁷¹ Since then social movement started during the colonial period against various social evils.⁷² The existence of various social systems continues to suppress women through the colonial and early post colonial period. So, the sections of women from various corner of India response the called and came out vigorously and actively participated in the social reformation movement irrespective of their caste, creed and religion.

The participation of women in the freedom struggle in India also awakened the political consciousness. The women perspective led to a new era in bringing about women's importance in the society in social, economic and political spheres and brought a new landmark in the development of women's status. Therefore the major outcome like Social Welfare Board in 1953, Women's Development in five year plan (1980-85), Committee on Status of Women in 1971, 73rd Amendment Act-Reservation 30% for Women, Conference on Women, Women toward equality, Women Development Studies, National Policy for Empowering women-2001,

Protection Women from Domestic violence-2006 and various awareness and organizations can be seen working for women's status in the society.⁷³

It is clear from the historical facts that women's status in the ancient Vedic civilization had been higher in status as compared to the later to colonial period in India. Therefore more rights and status have been a major demand in domestic and social rights in the present society. The Global feminism structure and the Human rights commission are the agencies working in society as well in Global context in the post colonial period in India for the cause of women.

1.2.2 Women in North East India

Generally India's Geographical region has been divided into four i.e. Northern, Western, Southern and North Eastern regions. The states like Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur, Mizoram, Arunachal, Tripura, Nagaland and Sikkim (newly added) comprise the North Eastern States of India. The North Eastern region is a home of diverse and mixed tribal communities. The North Eastern States had been historically attached with mainland India during the British colonial period. *Ahom* kings invited British people to help them against the atrocities of the Burmese. Coming to the point, the North Eastern Region is a dwelling place of many ethnic tribes who are totally different from the tribes of the mainland India, irrespective of their caste, creed, religion, beliefs, traditions and culture.

The status, role and rights of women in the North East are different from the women of other parts of the country. As compared to the other women in the country there is no denying the fact that the North Eastern women are enjoying better status or position in their respective society. The practices of *Dowry*, *Infanticide* and *Sati* have not been established customs and traditions amongst the people of the mongoloid stock of the North Eastern States. Assam is a home for many ethnic tribes like *Bodo*, *Garo*, *Rabha*, *Tiwa*, *Ahom*, *Sonawal*, *Kachari*, *Meche*, *Karbi*, *Mising*, *Naga*, *Dimasa*, etc. From the point of view of ancient time women were been looked into like morning twilight and a source of great spiritual force.⁷⁴ They enjoy the privileges of religious performance in the temple. Motherhood is an outstanding aim of married life that had represented the ideals to their offspring. They have their own traditional

customs of beautifying themselves with ornaments.⁷⁵ It is learnt from the *Buranjis* that the women in Assam were equal in place with men among the tribal communities. In the word of many historians it is known from the fact that women in Assam were very patriotic like *Nangbakla Gabharu* who said, “Give me your battle dress and I shall fight. You then know whether I am a man or woman. You can send my son only if you can make the *Dikhou* river flow against the current”.⁷⁶ There were many women in Assam who had contributed for their land and set a noteworthy figure both in medieval and in the independence period. As per the socio-religious and political matter is concerned the women in Assam generally modernized themselves in the field of education, social awareness and progressed in all social aspects.

Monogamy was a general phenomenon in the North Eastern tribal societies but polygamy was fairly practiced among the chiefs of the villages. Even in the Naga society such example were found in the earlier period but in the recent time it has been slowly discarded from the society. In Manipur the history clearly suggested that some *Meiteis* kings and nobles as well as the commoners also became polygamus. In such case first woman got more power and right than the other subsequent wives.⁷⁷ In the state of Arunachal Pradesh in the pre-literate society-J.N Choudhury throws a light on how Arunachal’s tribal societies of *Adi*, *Apatani*, *Nishi*, *Monpas*, *Miri* are practicing social entity. They have paternal society and the inheritance followed the paternal line. Further he also discussed the practice of ‘Bride price’ along with two others forms of the marriage ‘marriage by exchange and marriage by purchase’, as well as polygamy and divorce.⁷⁸ In the *Karbi* society women have no fair position in the society; they are often deprived of the property rights.⁷⁹

The *Khasi* and *Garo* women in Meghalaya tribes follow a matrilineal form of society. In the matrilineal society women become the head of the family and the title is inherited from the women's side. The property right is passed to the daughters in the family. In the patriarchal society a girl is married to her husband's house, but in matrilineal system man has to go to the girl’s house. Women have the supreme authority and rights over the decision of the family. But in administration and political spheres women seem to be far behind. *Lalung* in Assam also followed the same matrilineal society like that of *Khasi* and *Garo*.⁸⁰ In Mizoram, the *Mizo* society is

patriarchal in nature. Women possess all the basic rights in the society. Extending high respect to women is also one of the significant qualities preserved among the *Mizo* society. Woman has liberty in domestic life, rendering equal labour in the agricultural activities and is also openly involved in various petty businesses. There is no much distinction between men and women among the *Mizo* society; they have equal subjects. Further the *Mizo* women are involved in the local village councils as well as in the state and national administration.⁸¹

The overall studies in Naga society reveal that there are twelve major sub-tribes. Naga women possess equal amount of status in the society. They enjoyed inheritance rights as well as some role in religious institutions. Widow re-marriage and divorce were also encouraged in the society. Socially they were not restricted in participating in various religious and festival gathering. Attending in '*Mawopi*' which mean village priestess was also significant in the sense that they had been free to enjoy in the village administration since the early period. At the same time a girl's choices in choosing life partner for marriage was given in her hand.⁸² But still in some sub-tribes among the Nagas denial of having basic rights like hereditary, family decision etc. was found, but it did not affect the society in a profound way.

The state of Tripura is also a home for various smaller ethnic tribes like *Tripuri, Reang, Jamatia, etc.* They have been residing there since the very ancient time. Manik Chakrabarty highlighted the status of the tribal women in Tripura. He recognized equality of both men and women with respect to the sexes and social rights.⁸³ Women enjoyed equal economic power.⁸⁴ The property rights were provisioned to inherit for both son and daughter. Dipak Kumar Chaudhuri also explained that social evil like the sati system was not present among Tripura's tribal societies. Their marriage institutions were relatively liberal and widow remarriage was not a social offence. The economic activities they performed and participated in and their economic prospects have brought the tribal society to high esteemed.⁸⁵

Thus, it is clear from the discussion that women in the North Eastern States in India enjoyed more liberty in the society. The women possessed more or less equal rights with that of men socially, economically as well as in religious aspects. In the

field of politics, the probable right is found in most of the tribal community especially with regard to administration. Education was not very important in tribal societies before the colonial period. So when education came, it couldn't stop women from having it. In the cultural and religious aspects, women performed equal role in the religious institutions and were engaged in various socio-cultural functions. Despite having all such provisions and rights in the society, women are still considered or looked down as inferior to men.

1.2.3 Status of Bodo women: An overview

To Examine Bodo women in the society in terms of their Status, Role and Rights, it is very important to understand the very meaning of gender based role and its duties in the society. In Bodo society women are entitled to do all the domestic works like cooking, washing, child bearing, collecting firewood, cattle rearing, kitchen activities, weaving etc. The division of labour was also based on the physical strength of an individual woman. Men are expected to go for agricultural work, building houses, hunting, and fishing and do overall duties of the family. Bodo people, being clannish, represented the basic characters of the tribal society in colonial Assam.⁸⁶ To understand women's subordinate role in the state's male dominant society, it is necessary to understand the social and economic condition of the *Bodos* at that time. System of society is simply based on the society's socio-economic condition. Therefore social and economic conditions are much related to each other and go hand in hand in understanding one society as a whole. In *Bodo* society women make huge contributions in the social and economic structure. There is no caste system in the society. The *Boros* have only one sub-linguistic tribe not like in Nagas society. Scholars like *Brahma*⁸⁷, *Endle*⁸⁸ and *Narzi*⁸⁹ have given detailed surnames.

The position of Bodo women in the society acquired higher as compare to other women in the society in Assam.⁹⁰ Bodo women hold specific roles in the social set up like decision making and also in the various economic probabilities.⁹¹ Traditionally, Bodo society had different social functions where women were significantly involved in the preparation of different events.⁹² On the festive

occasions, women prepared food and also processed different food items like meat, fish, beverage, vegetables etc. Bodos have rich cultural and traditional festivals like *Bwisagu* (Bihu in Assamese term) which are popularly celebrated in Assam. The main festivals of celebration are added with drinks, eating and merry making. Bodo women remained busy in preparation of different food items like *Zumai* (rice beer) during the festival.⁹³ They also possessed different traditional medicinal knowledge to cure various diseases. Many of them acted as midwives or nurses at the time of child birth till today where modern medical facilities are not yet reached.

Six types of marriage have been practiced in *Bodo* society and some are arranged according to the situation of the girl's response in the family.⁹⁴ There is no denying the fact that *Bodo* girl who had attained the age of puberty enjoyed somewhat more liberty compared to the girls of other societies. They have the right of inheritance of the parental properties when there is only a female child in the family.⁹⁵ Such properties rights are given to them even after their marriage to other family. The female folk were entrusted with the responsibility of looking after the household's chores, articles and maintenance of properties in the family. The *Bodo* families keep lots of cattle. They are allowed to sell those things without the prior concerned of their parents.⁹⁶ *Bodo* women maintained a good profile and were given high respect in the society because of their modesty and sincerity in nature. The women in the society set an equal footing with that of male counterparts.⁹⁷

Bodo women have liberty to participate in various religious rituals as well as in singing, dancing and performing a religious prayer.⁹⁸ It is furnished that *Bodo* woman both in early life and later enjoyed equal measures of rights in terms of their basic family life and in social strata along with the male counterpart. However, there were some traditional evil beliefs which were restricted generally for women but they were not much affected by these traditional beliefs and their restrictions. *Bodo* women mostly spent time with their husbands and the husbands remained the coolest friend for them.⁹⁹ Thus, it shows that *Bodo* women keep good relations with their husbands.

In the matter of social ceremonies and cultural festivals, *Bodo* women are not debarred from holding such duties.¹⁰⁰ Religious performances by the women

remained as one of the main activities participated without any restrictions. So, when the religious mass gathering or ritual prayers take place, women play a key role in such matter. They equally shouldered the responsibilities and performed the religious festivals.¹⁰¹ As *Bathouism* has been the main traditional religion of *Bodos* since an early period, *Bodos* women were implicated with main role in maintaining and practicing the religious rituals by offering prayers to “*Sijoutanshali*” (Euphorbia Altar).¹⁰²

In the field of economic matter, Bodo women are having rightful position within the society. In Bodo villages one of the most usual things found in every corner of the house was the weaving loom in the courtyard. The frequent activity of women in the family is weaving. Bodo women are very skilled in weaving found right from the ancient days. The art of the weaving was one of the economic means for the women which helped to maintain their respective family. At present, the importance of small scale industry is found not only to meet the needs of the family but also for commercial purpose. Nowadays, as the impacts of globalization are broadening, the traditional activities like livestock farming and traditional agriculture activities cannot meet all the family expenses. In such a situation, *Bodo* women continue to look for alternate ways to feed their family.¹⁰³ The most important one is the weaving of *Eri* silk clothes, which is in great demand in different parts of the world. *Kachari* women are industrious in producing different items of handloom and handicrafts by which they have lifted up their economic level to a new height. In the field of agricultural work the Bodo women are not totally excluded. Their active participation in agriculture work proved that they were free to earn their livelihood as well as to contribute to the economic development. They are not far behind men in all agriculture activities. *Bakri* (granary) which symbolizes the economic condition of the family is still kept under the custody of women.¹⁰⁴ A prior consent is required when somebody wishes to use their belongings.¹⁰⁵ They make income by engaging in various economic activities like trade and commerce, business, vegetables vendor, meat vendor, Hotel industry etc in the post colonial period.¹⁰⁶ In North-East India, commercial activities are also practiced by other tribes like *Karbi*, *Tiwa*, *Adi*, *Nishi* etc. The traditional duties and position of *Bodo* women were adversely distorted when

different agencies like Christian missionaries, new *Brahma Dharma*, Colonial administration were inserted into *Bodo* society. Therefore, realizing the contribution and importance of *Bodo* women in society, the present research work has been carried out to make a humble attempt to discuss extensively, the Status, Roles and Rights of *Bodo* women to the yardstick that women play in the society with regard to their socio-economic, religious and political aspects in post colonial period.

1.3 The area of study

The area of the study is mainly confined to the undivided *Goalpara* district of Assam in the Post-Colonial period with special reference to the breakaway districts viz. *Kokrajhar*, *Dhubri*, *Chirang*, *Goalpara*, *Bongaigaon* and some of the adjoining *Bodo* inhabited areas. These areas are being inhabited by the *Bodos* since the ancient days. Undivided *Goalpara* was initially a part of Rangpur district of Bengal. Later *Goalpara* was transferred to British East India Company on 12th August, 1765 by Mughal emperor, *Farman* under Regulation X of 1822 and formed a separate district *Goalpara*.¹⁰⁷ In W.W. Hunter's statistical Account, *Goalpara* formed an entrance to the upper Brahmaputra valley that lays on both sides of it. It extends from 25° to 27° North Latitude and from 90° to 91° East Longitude. By 1870's, *Dhubri* became the head quarter and two sub-divisions were made i.e *Goalpara* and *Dhubri*.¹⁰⁸ The total area covered was 4,433 sq. miles on the North bounded by Himalayan Kingdom Bhutan, on the South Garo hills, on the East Kamrup and on the West Jalpaiguri, Rangpur and the state Cooch Behar.¹⁰⁹ Since then the *Bodo* are mostly concentrated in the present districts of *Goalpara*, *Dhubri*, *Kokrajhar*, *Chirang*, and *Bongaigaon* in Assam. The total population was more than six lakhs and according to the census report of 1872, the total number of *Kacharis* population under undivided *Goalpara* excluding Eastern Duar was 22,755. In Eastern *Duar* the number was much more.¹¹⁰ According to the census of 1951 the *Boro* speakers estimated upto 1, 70,000 people.¹¹¹ According to the census of 1961 total *Boro* speakers rose up to 2, 80,345. In 1971¹¹² census the number increased to 6, 10,459.¹¹³ According to the census of 1961 the *Boro* people population in *Goalpara* was 1,54,359 in total and among them male-80,147 and female-74,212.¹¹⁴ According to 1971 census the *Bodos* form the population of 8, 67,017; census report of 1991 consisted of 11, 84,569.¹¹⁵ As per

2001 census report the Bodos in Assam were 1,296,162.¹¹⁶ The most Bodo populated districts at present in Assam are Kokrajhar, Chirang, Baksa, Udalguri. Agriculture remains as the main source of income and the majority of Bodo people are still living in the rural areas.

1.4 Statement of the Problem

The contribution and roles of Bodo women is the area which needs more focused in-depth study. It is a fact that Bodo women occupied high position in the society and play a significant role in the socio-economic and cultural spheres since ancient time. But the fact is that, despite having such contribution in the society they still lack recognition. Thus, fresh attempt has been made to study Bodo women's role and position in the post colonial period to identify what new changes have taken place in Bodo society. So, this research work is carried out to explore and throw a complete picture on the 'Post Colonial Bodo Society with special reference to the Status of women, their Roles and Rights that contribute the yardstick in measuring the socio-economic, religious and political aspects in the post colonial period which probably have been touched by some few scholars but require much more detailed in study.

1.5 Objective of the Study

The following are the main thrust and the objectives of the present work.

1. To make an in-depth analysis of the Status and role of Bodo women in social life.
2. To study Bodo women and their economic activity.
3. To examine Bodo women and their religious activity.
4. To understand Bodo women and their political consciousness.

1.6 Research Methodology

As per the methodology of the study is concerned, this research work is on the gender approach based on the inter-disciplinary method with the combination of the various historical sources, like primary and secondary based on the social anthropological and historical records. The primary data is mainly gathered from

different Gazetteers, census reports, oral sources, unpublished records, field investigation, observation, participation and interview with knowledgeable persons. The collected data and information are relatively used as historical approach and analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively whenever necessary.

1.7 Scope and Review of Literature

The status, role and rights of Bodo women in the society leave a significant scope to study. In a historical perspective it throws a new light in the study that will earn a better place in the present scenario by the academicians, students and scholars. However, much in-depth studies on Bodo women are not upto the mark. Some brought much light as an eye opener but in spite of their work some still awaits careful analysis and treatment in better light. Many researchers have carried out studies on the history of the Bodo. However, they have not much dealt with the status, role and rights of Bodo women in the post colonial period. Therefore, it is an ample scope to conduct the present research work.

From the beginning of the first half of the twentieth century, the outstanding work that still stands as a milestone and some of the related sources or works done in the past are like, *The Kacharis*, cosmo publication, Delhi, 1975 by Sydney Endle. The book is an authentic source that describes the *Bodo-Kachari* tribal people. This book touches the origin and gives details about their migration, social, cultural, economic, religious beliefs. Endle also highlighted the role and position of the Bodo women and expressed his view on women saying far from being degraded in the society they enjoy equality with men. It is the first hand original work written by Endle.

The Bodo Children of Bhulumbutter, Spectrum Publication, Guwahati, Delhi, 1997 edited by Thomas Pulloppillil and Jacob Auckal, a combination of essays provides an insight into Bodo religion, Brahma, and Christianity in the line of social marriage system of the Bodos. "*The Bodo; Emergence and Assertion of a Minority*" spectrum publication, Guwahati, 1992, is also another book by Thomas Pulloppillil & Jacob Auckal's work on the origin of the Bodos and the growing trends of minority in the face of elite larger tribes in Assam but did not highlighted much regarding the

socio-religious and culture lives of the Bodos but rarely mention the role and position of Bodo women.

Ajay Roy in his book '*The Boro Imbroglia*', spectrum publication, Guwahati: Delhi, 1995 narrated the historical and the changing socio-economic circumstances leading to the different movements. He highlighted the different phases of Bodo people in Assam, how Bodo people lose and became minority in Assam despite having glorious past history.

Suchitra Sen Chaudhury's '*The Bodo movement and women's participation*'. In her book, she notably studied the various Bodo Movement and the leaders their effective organization and contribution in the movement participating right from the grassroots level. She mainly reflected the Bodo women's role and activities in respect to socio-economic probability having maintaining the peace process during the Bodoland movement and remain as the main pillar in the miles of movement.

Tribal women of Assam, Madhushree Das, EBH publishers, Guwahati, 2012. The book highlights different tribal women in Assam in socio-cultural, education and literacy spheres and also brings ideas on the changing social aspects and development. She focuses on Bodo women literacy percentage in the studies.

Sekhar Brahma in his book, '*Religion of the Boros and their Socio-cultural Transition: A historical perspective*', DVS publishers, Guwahati, 2006 writes about the religion of Bodos which have been traditionally practicing since the early time by the Bodos and also briefly mentions about the role and status of Bodo women that they played in the society but significantly fails to mention the position and status of women particularly in respect to their activities socially, economically and religious.

The Bodo kacharir Samaj Aru Sanskriti, Bhaben Narzi's work on the Bodo cultural society has been reflected in his book which was published by Lawyers book stall, Guwahati, 1971 and 1st published in 1966. The book is an outstanding work of him; it covers the society and culture of Assam and West Bengal. He describes the social system, rites and rituals. It also touches on the origin of the Bodos belonging to the Mongoloid race. He somehow mentions the various social and religious

restrictions on Bodo women and is silent on Endle remarks giving dominant status to women in fishing practice.

Krishna Bhowmick's book, *Indian women: the Ushering of a New Dawn*, New Delhi, 2006. In his book he mentions the Dalits and the tribal women, their oppression and various problems faced by them in the society but also fail to mention about the measures to solve their problems which the book contain few of the women problems in the caste distinct society.

Gender Mainstreaming and women, written by Usha Sharma, Delhi, 2004. In this book she tried to expose the deteriorating condition of Indian women in the world of patriarchal society, its dominance and less scope of the women in the society was the result of such system which has been majorly impacted the condition of women rights in the society has been slightly highlighted in this book.

Women's Movement in Assam and North East India: An Assessment, social movement in North East India, Indus publishing overview literature, New Delhi, 1998, This Assessment book of Aparna Mahanta highlighted the participation of women in the North East women in different movements but she fails to mention regarding Bodo women. Therefore, the books fail to mention the role played by Bodo women in the Movement.

Kacharis Buranjis (in Assamese) by S.K Bhuyan is a chronicle *Buranjis* deals with the Kacharis/Bodo. He talks about the Bodo kings and Kingdom of the past Kachari's history. Mention the relations between Ahom and the *Kacharis* from the 14th century to the 18th century especially in a political line. His book regarded as an important source for the history of the *Kacharis* (Bodo) to study the past history in the present context.

Kameswar Brahma's book, *'A study of socio-religious Beliefs, Practices and Ceremonies of the Bodos: with special reference to the Bodos of Kokrajhar*, Pustak Publication, Calcutta, 1992 covers a wide range of various aspects of the Bodos and their society. It mentions about the economic practices, religious rites and rituals, and also covers the privileges and rights enjoyed by Bodo women. He targeted Kokrajhar

district as the main hub for studies where the majority of the Bodo people are living. He also points out Bodo women having equal freedom of marriage, doing various rituals, in socio-economic aspects that have the same facility of enjoying each and every societal privilege, having equal value and rights in economy activities. Social systems like *Gwrjia lakhinai*, widow remarriage have been discussed in a profound way.

A Study in Cultural Heritage of the Bodos and Aspect of Social Customs of the Bodos are the two books of Dr. Kameswar Brahma. In which both of his books are written on the cultural heritage and Social customs of the Bodos. However, the contribution of Women is not highlighted in a particular way in both of the books. In *Bodo Civilization in India*, Bakul Chandra Basumatary, 2009 mentions the Bodo origin as *Kirata* and discuss various theories to trace the history and origin of the Bodos.

The Social and Religious Institutions of the Bodos, Premlata Devi, Geophil publishing House, Guwahati, 1998. In this book it gives an account of the Ethic of beliefs, gods and different Bodo patterns of religion. She makes distinctions between male and female deities. She talks about the relation between wife and husband. She states that there are some matriarchal characters in the Bodo patriarchal society. The focusing of more roles in religious activities by the women has been brought to attention.

Journey Towards Enlightenment- Gurudev and the Bodo Society, Bidyasagar Narzary and Malabika Mitra, G.B.D. Publishers, Guwahati: Kolkata, 2004 and Manik Kumar Brahma's *Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma: His Life and Deed*, N.L Publication, Kokrajhar, 2001. They throw ample light on the birth of *Brahma Dharma* among the Bodos during the colonial period. Mitra's work focuses on the *Mahilla Samities* and their role in bringing awareness among women for social reformation. In '*Forgotten Heroes*' (G.B.D. Publishers, Kolkata: Guwahati, 2004, Bidyasagar Narzary has paid homage to all the freedom fighters who were involved in the Freedom Movement. The important part of this book is that he mentions Bodo women's involvement in the National Movement.

The first Boro magazine '*Bibar*' was edited by Satish Chandra Basumatary and was published by the Kokrajhar district employee Association, Kokrajhar, 1924. It gives great value and deep insight into the contribution of various student unions like Sanmillan etc. Its major input was to provide and encourage girl education in Bodo society. *BoroniPhisa O Ayen* (translated by Prahlad Kumar Brahma, Harish Chandra Kachari and Madharam Kacharai, Basumatary Library, Dudhnoi, 2004 and *Boroni Pandulipi*, G.B.D Publishers, Guwahati, 2004 and *Samajik Sanbidhan*, Boko anchalik BoroJati Parishad, 1998-1999. It brings out much information regarding the customs, religious rites, traditional instrument, weapons in the Bodo traditional arena, and in *Samajik Sambidhan*, what women are not supposed to do or not to do on various occasions under the matter of certain circumstances. The *Swrangsali* (souvenir) and the *Brahma* mouthpiece give ample information on Bodo religion *Bathou* and aspects of culture.

Kameswar Brahma's research article '*Role and Status of the Bodo women in their society through the Ages*' published in the ICHR bulletin Vol.I: Number XII, 1999. *Selected Essays on Tribes and Caste of Assam* (2007), *Tribes of Assam P-I* (1987) and *Boro sanskriti Drisitipat* (2002). However, on the other hand lectures on the research article "The Brahma Movement and Socio-Religious in Bodo Society in Early twentieth Century" by Anil Boro, ICHR mention the Brahma Dharma movement. '*A History of Bodo Literature*' written by Anil Kumar Brahma, Sahitya Akademi, Kolkata, 2012 discussed the history of Bodo Literature. All these articles and books are related to the Boro religion, society, festivals, background of the Bodos, origin, Christianity in Bodo society and the history of Bodo literature. A *Treatise of the Bodos* by Bakul Chandra Basumatary, kokrajhar: Mumbai, 2012 put forward the theory of Bodo in Bodo perspective and evolution of Hindu in Bodo and Pragjyotishpur and its root on the Bodo pakrit. "*Socio Culture of Bodos Part-II*" (in Bodo) by Megnath Mushahary, Kokrajhar, 2019 also mentions the socio-culture structure in the Bodo society.

An article, *Women in Bodo society*, M. Islam, Frontier, Vol. 44, No.28, Jan 22-28, 2012., which mentions women in the society in socio-economic and religious areas. '*The Saga of the Bodos* by Hira Charan Narjinary', Kolkata, 2014. He

mentions the Bodo women who sacrificed their lives in the various movements of the Bodos for their political identity and fight for their nations.

Research paper article of S.R. Narzary on “Identifying Bodo women through Educational Empowerment with special reference to BTAD in Assam”, IJHS Journal, Vol.4 issue-7, 2016 mentions precisely and comprehensively discuss on the socio-economic development and education among Bodo women.

Sekhar Brahma’s on his research article “Historical interpretation on Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma and women empowerment”, IRJHS journal, Vol.4, issue 10, 2017 mentions women since Brahma movement and their rights in decision making in the society and various steps taken to empower Bodo women in the society. P. Basumatary and S.P Chainary on their book, ‘*Monograph of the Boros*’, Lakshi Publisher & Distributor, New Delhi, 2017 mentions that in Bodo society, folk and tales reciting are related to the women regarding their positive and negative and here it tells the negativity a little more significantly than the positive one.

Bodo Christians, the Bodo movement and Nation building, Arjun Basumatary, ISPCK, Delhi, 2017 highlights the role of Bodo Christians in the Bodoland movement and the Nation building. In his studies he mentions different Bodoland movements and Bodo participation. The *Political Identity Crisis of the Bodos and their Bodoland Movement* written by Dr. Premananda Mosahari, NL Publication. Guwahati::kokrajhar, 2011 has mentioned the Bodo political crisis, from the Brahma movement and the political exploitation to the tribal people of Assam. *Keeping Faith an Interrogative Model of Christian Religious Education in Post- Colonial perspective*, Shyam Kumar Basumatary, ISPCK, Delhi, 2017 mentions the Saorian Ethos and Bodo worldviews, in which he highlights the Bodo traditional Saori (which means Community working culture in group for free) that s existed in the Bodo society since the colonial period.

The Book ‘*A History of Assam*’(1926) by Edward Gait, EBH Publishers(India), Guwahati, 1926 mentions that regard to their wide distribution, over which Bodo languages are in uniform type are still existing the same. The Bodo kingdom belongs to the *Kacharian* allied tribe.

In the book '*Early History of Kamarupa*' (1933) by K.L Barua, Lower's book stall, 2nd edition, Guwahati, 1966. A *Comprehensive History of Assam*, of S.L Barua, Munshiram Manoharlal publishers' pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 2002, H.K Barpujari's *A Comprehensive History of Assam*, Vol.I, publication Board of Assam and 2nd edition B.K Barua's *A Cultural History of Assam*, (early period) Bina Library, 1st edition all mentions the ancient *Kachari* kingdom, the early history of the *Kachari* and their social and political history. Bodo people's land culture is also briefly stated in those books.

Mohini Mohan Brahma in his book '*Folk songs of the Bodos* (1960)' has systematically discussed the folk song and through this it displays their social and religious rituals. S.K Chatterjee's book '*Kirata Janakriti*'(1974) regards the Bodo tribe as the important Indo-Mongoloid race. T.C Sharma also states that the origin of food and he says that it is widely accepted in the North east states that the Bodo people brought different food techniques and skills and domestication of animals. Also he says they are the first introducer of the farming of silk worm and of the same view with Bordoloi in their book '*Tribes of Assam*', 1987, Part-1. Anil Boro's book *Folk Literature of Bodos*, Adhunik Prakashan, Guwahati attempts to describe the traditional narratives, songs, proverbs and riddles found in Bodo folklores. Liladhar Brahma on his book '*Religion and Dances of the Bodos*(1993)' mentions the daily social life reflected in Bodo dancing. Mongolsingh Hazowary in his thesis '*The Traditional Boro Festivals: A Critical Study* (1993) Gauhati University, clearly discusses the Bodo fair and festivals and the philosophy of pujas. Indra Maloti Narzaree in her book '*Boro Harimuarw Thunlai Bijirnai* (2005)' discusses the social life of the Bodos and the seasonal festival, Art and culture. Binay Kumar Brahma in his book '*Boroni Subung Harimu* (2009)' discusses the fairs and festivals of Bodo society and also highlights the folk customs of dance. Manaranjan Lahiri's '*History of the Bodo Literature*,' Alaiyaron publishers, Kokrajhar, 1991 is a source that highlights the historical background of the literary activities of the Bodos and their influence in the field of education in Bodo society. Dr. Premananda Muchahary's '*Burlungbuthur Hayenao Boro ni Swdwmshri*', Guwahati, 1996 is an article that mentions the Bodos of the Brahmaputra valleys and their society norms. A.K. Boro's

work on ‘*Traditional Religion of the Bodos: From Traditional practices to industrialization edited in Religion and Society in North East India*’ edited by Dr. D. Nath describes the ancient and traditional religion of the Bodos and their practices and beliefs in the society. Binoy Kr Brahma ‘*Boroni Fwrbw (Boros festivals)*’, N.L publication, Kokrajhar, 2011 mentions the different religious and cultural festivals of the Bodos practiced since the early period. Dr. S.K Bhuyan’s handiwork work on ‘*Kacharir Buranji*’, Historical and antiquarian Studies, Govt. of Assam, Guwahati records the history of the *Kachari* people in Assam, about their origin, political and social history and their development. It’s a major source in this book. Debendra Chandra Das’s research work on ‘*Autonomy movement of the plain tribes of Assam a case study of the Bodos 1967-1993*’, Thesis, Gauhati University, 2003. The research work deals with the different movement of Bodo people for their demand for a separate Bodoland led by different organizations at different period of time. Shabnam Bormon’s ‘*Boro women in the tribal society and economy of colonial Assam*’ is also a research thesis submitted to Gauhati University in 2013 which focuses on Bodo women and their contribution in the yardstick of their economy and social role in the society. Debasis Sen’s thesis submitted at Gauhati University in 1981 on ‘*Cultural history of the Kacharis of North Eastern India with special reference to their activities in NC hills and Cachar*’ highlights the overall history of the Kacharis and their social integrity in the society. Bimal Kanti Brahma’s PhD Thesis on “*Status and Role of the Bodo Women in Northern Part of Brahmaputra Valley in Assam [1919-2003]*” carried out the status of Bodo women and their role in cultural symbiosis, workforce in the Bodoland movement and responses through various projects undertaken by the BTC government for empowering of women. Also in his studies he discusses women’s role and status in socio- economic and political consciousness of Bodo women particularly. Rimwnla Basumatary’s research on ‘*Social and Political role of Bodo women: A study of Kokrajhar District, BTAD, Assam*’, unpublished thesis submitted at Bodoland University briefly highlights the socio-political status and participation in election. At the same time studies is focuses on Bodo women’s participation in the Bodoland movement. Paresh Bhuyan’s the first hand work on ‘*Folk Art & culture of Bodo-Kachari and Rabha Tribes of Assam*’ published by Bodo Sahitya Sabha, Kokrajhar, 2015 shows the different socio-cultural, religious and

economic activities, their tools and equipments along with a brief mentions on the role performed by Bodo women in the society. Satyendra Nath Mondol's a research chapter on '*History and the Culture of the Bodos*' ed. by Bonny Narzary, Jalpaiguri mentions the history of the Bodos in West Bengal and their culture and traditions and the different cultural beliefs and social norms in Bodo society. All the sources mentioned in this review section like books, Journals, Articles, Proceeding, thesis etc basically deal with the historical origin, socio-cultural affinities and practices, economic activities in the society and some sort of political involvements by the Bodo people as a whole. So, further examination on the Status, Role and Rights of Bodo women in the Society in the post colonial period has been undertaken for study.

Besides the above works many articles journals and the other available sources have been reviewed to ascertain the research proposal. The original sources including personal interviews with knowledgeable persons have been collected to present the subject concerned in an accurate way.

1.8 Organization of the Chapter

The study has been organized in six chapters as follows.

The First Chapter is the introductory one which deals with a brief introduction to the general concept of women and their importance in the society. Historical sketch of the origin of Bodo, Women in India-an overview, Women in North East India, Status of Bodo Women-an overview, The Area of study, Statement of the Problem, Objectives of the Study, Research Methodology, Scope and Review of Literature and Organization of Chapters.

The Second Chapter is on the Status and role of Bodo women in social life. Here, in this chapter it is started with the introductory terms of the concept of status and role with respect to women in the society, in family life, marriage ceremonies, Bride price and Dowry, women in birth and naming ceremony, in inheritance of property, dress and ornament, in festival dance, Kathi gasa saonai, Zou preparation, Bodo women as Ojha and Bodo women in *Saori* have been analyzed and discussed.

The Third Chapter throws light on Bodo women and their economic activity, with a brief introduction to the economic role of the women in society, continued with the discussion of Bodo women in the family economy, in livestock farming, participating in agricultural economy, fishing and craft making, weaving and sericulture, production of zou, labour work, trade and commerce and Self Help Group have been studied.

The Fourth Chapter discusses Bodo women and religious activity, with a summary on the concept of religion and women's role in the starting part and continues to examine Bodo women in religious festivals, Kerai puja, Garja puja, in Bwisagu, Domashi, Kathi gasa saonai, Amthisua, Bodo women as Daini, in Brahma Dharma, Christianity and in some other Hindu sects, based on the available sources using the interdisciplinary tool.

The Fifth Chapter deals with Bodo women and political consciousness, highlighting briefly the general concept of political aspect and the importance of women in politics in the society and various understanding on women's marginalization in political participation, women in India in the pre-post colonial period, condition of women in India, development of women organizations, women in Indian freedom movement and political participation, historical sketch of the Bodos in political consciousness and women, Bodo women in politics, formation of Bodo women organization and role. They have been reviewed critically and presented in the research format.

The Sixth Chapter is the summary and conclusion of the whole work.

Endnotes

-
- ¹ Devaki Jain & Rajput Pam, ed, *Narratives from the Women's Studies Family*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 2008,p.17.
- ² Gitali Saikia & Tarun Gogoi, edited, *Ethnic Women in Changing Social Scenario in North East India*, Bedakantha, Jorhat, Assam, 2013,p.8.
- ³ Pratibha Brahma, "Bodo Girls/ Women Peddling for Sustainable Change", *Mughani Sakhi(Kuga Laisi)*, ABSU, 7th -9th January, 2019, Baksa,p. 241.
- ⁴ Dr.Tanuja Trivedi, *Women in North East India*, JnanadaPrakashan (P&D), New Delhi, 2011, p.176.
- ⁵ George Pfeffer and Deepak Kumar Bahera., *Contemporary Society: Traibal Studies* Vol. 1, Concept publishing House, New Delhi, 1997, pp. 170-171.
- ⁶ Dr. Oinam Ranji Singh & Kumud Ranjan Basumatary, "Historical Basis of the Bodos Identity Formation", *Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences (IOSR-JHSS)*, Volume 22, Issue 6, Ver.12 (June 2017),p.21.
- ⁷ P. C Bhattacharya, *A Descriptive Analysis of the Boro Language*, Guwahati University, 1997, p.16.
- ⁸ Dr.Oinam Ranjit Singh & Kumud Ranjan Basumatary, *op.cit.*, p.21.
- ⁹ Dr. Monisha Behal, "Lives of Women and Rights They Must Enjoy", *Mugani Saki;* (22nd Issue) *ABSU Mouth piece*, published on 50th Annual Conference, Batasipur, Sonitpur, Assam, from 18-21 January, 2018, pp.164-165.
- ¹⁰ A social system, where father is the head of the family, one who decides and has an authority over women and children
- ¹¹ A system in which one belongs to one paternal lineage, it involves inheritance of property, name or titles through male line.
- ¹² Alexander Mackenzie, *The North East Frontier of India*, Mittal Publication, New Delhi, 1999, pp. 6-8.
- ¹³ Ajay Roy, *The Boro Imbrogio*, Spectrum Publications, New Delhi, 1995, p.5.
- ¹⁴ Premalata Devi, *Social and Religious Institutions of Bodos*, Geophil Publishing House, Guwahati, 3rd print,2007,p.3.
- ¹⁵ Kameswar Brahma, *A Study of Socio-Religious Beliefs and Practices of the Bodos (With Special Reference to the Bodos of Kokrajhar District)* , Punthi Pustak , Calcutta, 1992, pp.35-44.

-
- ¹⁶ P.C Bhattacharya, *op.cit.*, p.16.
- ¹⁷ B.H. Hudson, 1847, *Miscellaneous Essays Relating to Indian Subject*, 105 ff., Hira Charan Narzary, 1885, *in Search of Identity: The Meche, Introductory*, p.21.
- ¹⁸ Bakul Chandra Basumatary, *Bodo Civilization in India*, published by Daorao Dekreb Narzary, printed at Ganda offset press, kokrajhar, 2009, p.65.
- ¹⁹ Mohinni Mohan Brahma, *Folk-songs of the Bodos*, publication Deppt. Gauhati University, 1st edition, 1954, p.7.
- ²⁰ *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society (JRAS)*, London, 1929, pp.581f.
- ²¹ G.A. Grierson, *Linguistic Survey of India*, vol.III, Indian Reprint, New Delhi, 1967, p.41.
- ²² S.K Chatterjee, *Kirata-Jana-Kriti: The Indo-Mongoloids; Their Contribution to the History and Culture of India*, The Asiatic Society, Calcutta, 1974, p.38.
- ²³ *Ibid.*
- ²⁴ Sydney Endle, *The Kacharis*, Cosmo Publication, New Delhi, 1975, pp.3-4.
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*
- ²⁶ Nijwm Gwra Brahma, *Traditional Rites, Ritual and Ceremonies of the Bodos*, Unpublished PhD Thesis submitted to Bodoland University, 2018, p.5.
- ²⁷ Bakul Chandra Basumatary, *A Treatise on the Bodos*, Mumbai, 2012, p.1.
- ²⁸ Edward Gait, *A History of Assam*, fifth edition lawyer's book of stall, Guwahati, 1992, p.237.
- ²⁹ Premalata Devi, *op.cit.*, p.6.
- ³⁰ Edward Gait, *op.cit.*, p.238.
- ³¹ Anil Kumar Boro, *A History of Bodo Literature*, Bodo Sahitya Sabha, Kolkata, 2nd print, 2012, p.11.
- ³² Edward Gait, *op.cit.*p.248.
- ³³ Annan Gosai is the Creator, God in Bodo
- ³⁴ Premlata Devi, *op.cit.*,p.67.
- ³⁵ Nijwm Gwra Brahma, *op.cit.*, p.4.
- ³⁶ Bakul Chandra Basumatary, *op.cit.*, p.1.
- ³⁷ Edward Gait, *op.cit.*, pp.11-15.

-
- ³⁸ Gait, *op.cit.*,pp.11-15. See also B.K Baruah, *op.cit.*,p.15.
- ³⁹ B.K Barua, *A Cultural History of Assam (Early period)*, vol.1 Gauhati University, Guwahati, 1951,p.52.
- ⁴⁰ Chandana Bhattacharjee, *Ethnicity and Autonomy Movement: Case study of Bodo Kachari of Assam*, Vikash publication, New Delhi, 1996, p.63. See also Chatterji, *op.cit.*,pp.97-98.
- ⁴¹ Gait, *op.cit.*,p.29.
- ⁴² Bakul Chandra Basumatary, *op.cit.*,p.12.
- ⁴³ Kameswar Brahma, *A Study in Cultural Heritage of the Bodos*, Bina Library, Guwahati, 2009, p.14.
- ⁴⁴ K.L. Kothari, *Tribal Social Change in India*, Himangshu publication, Delhi, 1985, pp.4-5.
- ⁴⁵ The Indian constitution, its provision to recognize the backward as scheduled Tribe.
- ⁴⁶ Katyayana Sr. S., 1, 1.7.
- ⁴⁷ Rajasekhara. *Kavyamimamsa* (G.O.S.), p.53.
- ⁴⁸ R.C Majumdar, *An Advance History of India*, London, Macmillan & Co. Ltd, 1963,p.31.
- ⁴⁹ S. K. De, edited, *The Cultural Heritage of India*, Vol-II, Calcutta, 1962, p.602.
- ⁵⁰ Kasam Ali Ahmed, *Status of Women in India*, EBH Publishers, Guwahati, 2nd edition, 2010,p.2.
- ⁵¹ R.C Majumdar, *op.cit.*p.31.
- ⁵² Sadhu Mukundcharandas, *Hindu Womanhood*, Swaminarayan Aksharpath, Amdavad, 2012, p.xxii.
- ⁵³ K.L Khuran, *History of India*, Agra, 2nd edition, 1997,p.38.
- ⁵⁴ Kasim Ali Ahmed, *op.cit.*,p.6-7.
- ⁵⁵ *Ibid.*,p.7.
- ⁵⁶ Rig Veda.V.43.15 ; and Rig Veda.X.40.10
- ⁵⁷ Kasim Ali Ahmed, *op.cit.*,p.9.
- ⁵⁸ Researcher's personal conclusion: Lakshmi is still used in the Hindu culture to the female girl or woman or daughter in-law, when they see a girl of good appearance then they say '*Lakshmi Gharka*'; which they think is a good sign of the family.

-
- ⁵⁹ Smritis is a Hindu traditional text containing traditional teaching, which is used in the case of girl's puberty in Vedic period or later.
- ⁶⁰ Kasim Ali Ahmed, *op.cit.*,p.24.
- ⁶¹ D.C Ganguly, *Some Aspect of the Position of Women in Ancient India' in the Cultural Heritage of India*,pp.598-599.
- ⁶² Kasim Ali Ahmed, *op.cit.*,p.31.
- ⁶³ *Ibid.*,p.36.
- ⁶⁴ M. Mujeeb, *The Indian Muslims*, London, 1967, p.223.
- ⁶⁵ *Ibid.*
- ⁶⁶ *One of the social systems in the medieval period in India mostly practices among the Hindus.*
- ⁶⁷ Kasim Ali Ahmed, *op.cit.*, p.44-45.
- ⁶⁸ P.N Chora, *Some Experiment in Social Reforms in Medieval India, in the Cultural Heritage of India*, edited by S.K De, Vol-II, 1962, p.635.
- ⁶⁹ *Ibid.*,pp.126-127.
- ⁷⁰ S.C Raychoudhury, *History of Muslims India*, ed, 1986, pp.252-253.
- ⁷¹ B.N Pandey, *The Break up of British India*, London, Macmillan, 1969. pp. 200-223.
- ⁷² Jawahar Lal Nehru, *The Discovery to India*, New York, 1946.p.450-56.
- ⁷³ Edited by C. Khonglah., *Women in North East India- An Annotated Bibliography*, Akansha Publishing House, Delhi, pp.xv-xvi.
- ⁷⁴ Kasim Ali Ahmed, *op.cit.*,p.55, quoted from B.K Baruah, *A Cultural History of Assam*, (Early Period),Vol.I, 1969,pp.132-133.
- ⁷⁵ Kasim Ali Ahmed, *op.cit.*p.57.
- ⁷⁶ *Ibid.*,p.60, Quoted S.K Bhuyan, *Study in the History of Assam*, Guwahati, 1965, pp.71-73.
- ⁷⁷ Edited, Sarthak Sengupta, *Tribal Panorama of North East India*, Gyan Publishing House, Delhi, 2013,pp.60-72.
- ⁷⁸ C.Khonglah., edited, *op.cit.*p.2.
- ⁷⁹ Tanmay Bhattacharjee, *Sociology of the Karbis*, B.R Publishing Corporation, University of Michigan,1986,p.28.

⁸⁰ B.K Gohain, *Status of Women in the Society of Matrilineal Lalungs of Assam*, C. Khonglah (Edited), *Women in North –East India An Annotated Bibliography*, Akansha Publishing House, New Delhi, 2008, p.23.

⁸¹ Seminar held in Aizawl on ‘*status of women in tribal societies of Mizoram*’, edited in the Book by C. Khonglah,*op.cit.*,pp.48-50.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p.51-56.

⁸³ *Ibid.*,pp.58-60.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*,pp.58-60.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*,pp.58-60.

⁸⁶ Sydney Endle, *op.cit.*, p.2.

⁸⁷ Kamsewar Brahma, *op.cit.*,pp.35-44.

⁸⁸ Endle, *op.cit.*,pp.24-27.

⁸⁹ Bhaben Narzi, *Boro kacharir Samaj Aru Sanskriti*, Lawyer’s Book Stall, Guwahati, 1971, p.99.

⁹⁰ Brahma Kameswar, *op.cit.*,p.33.

⁹¹ Ann Oakley: *Sex, Gender and Society*, Maurice Temple Smith Ltd., London: Gower, 1985, pp. 152-156

⁹² *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, 6th edition*, Vol. II, Oxford University Press, New York, pp. 3340-3341.

⁹³ Interview with Premnath Basumatary, age-85, occupation-ex village Headman, vill-Basugaon, dist-Kokrajhar,BTC, Assam on 24/09/2018

⁹⁴ K Brahma,*op.cit.*,pp 17-30.

⁹⁵ Bhaben Narzi,*op.cit.*, p.99.

⁹⁶ Interview with Anirudha Brahma, age-70,occupation-farmer, Vill- Kersuabari,PO-Pathakata, dist –Kokrajhar, BTc, Assam on 25/11/ 2017

⁹⁷ Sidney Endle, *op, cit.*,p 22.

⁹⁸ K Brahma,*op, Cit.*,p 17.

⁹⁹ Sidney Endle, *Op, Cit.*,p-23.

¹⁰⁰ Binoy Kr. Brahma, *Boroni subung harimu*, edited, N.L Publication, Kokrajhar, BTC Assam, 2009

-
- ¹⁰¹ *The Bodo, The Mouth Piece*, Bodo Sahitya Sabha, 38th issue, 2013, pp.126-129.
- ¹⁰² Sidney Endle, *op.cit.*,P-35
- ¹⁰³ Interview – Subhod Basumatary,age-71, Occupation-cultivator, Vill- Dotoma, Dist- Kokrajhar, Assam on 23/05/17
- ¹⁰⁴ Kameswar Brahma,*op.cit.*, p.34.
- ¹⁰⁵ Interview with Bena Brahma, Age-60, Occupation- priest, Vill- Santinagar, PO- Dotma, Dist- Kokrajhar, Assam on 05/06/2018
- ¹⁰⁶ Sidney Endle, *op.cit.*,p 23
- ¹⁰⁷ Edward Gait, *op.cit.*,p.283.
- ¹⁰⁸ W.W Hunter, *A Statistical Account of Assam Vol. II*, Spectrum Publication, Guwahati: Delhi, 1998, p.17.
- ¹⁰⁹ B.C. Allen, et al., *Gazetteer of Bengal and North East India*, Mittal Publications, New Delhi, 2001, p.516.
- ¹¹⁰ Assam Janajati,p.67.
- ¹¹¹ Census of India, paper No.1 of 1951,pp.51ff.
- ¹¹² Census of India, 1961, Assam, Vol.III, Part-II –C, Table, pp.100 ff.
- ¹¹³ Census of India, 1971, *Assam, Social and Cultural Table*, C-VII, and C-VIII, Series 3-part II-C9i, pp.3 ff.
- ¹¹⁴ Census,1961, *op.cit.*,pp.100 ff.
- ¹¹⁵ Khema Sonowal, *Why Bodoland Movement?*, EBH Eastern Publication, Guwahati, 2013, p.2.
- ¹¹⁶ Census Report Assam -2001.