

## CHAPTER 4

### THE IMPACT OF CHRISTIANITY ON THE BODO SOCIETY

Christian missionaries were governed by their mission objective to preach Christianity but besides promoting their faith they also involved themselves in ministries of education, literature, social justices, health care and economic development. Results of their activities were both positive and negative in nature. It is in this context an attempt has been made to analyse the activities of the christian missionaries among the Bodos.

#### **POSITIVE IMPACT**

#### **RELIGIOUS IMPACT**

First of all, in the traditional religion, *Bathou Bwrai* is worshipped as the supreme God. It involves propitiation of objects such as sun, moon, rivers, forest etc with sacrifices of birds and animals to appease God to prevent disasters of any kind from falling upon them.<sup>1</sup> Here the worship of *Bathou Bwrai* and propitiation to different objects present polytheism. Christianity on the other hand is a monotheistic religion involving worship of one God. There was a change from polytheistic belief to monotheistic belief. Secondly, propitiation to different objects illustrates the fear of spirit with supernatural powers. Bodos seemed to have been psychologically enslaved by the fear of spirits. Sacrifices of birds and animals to appease them have proven this. When the Bodos converted to christianity a new direction came among them according to the teachings of Jesus. They accepted Jesus as the saviour. They began to believe that Jesus liberate them from all evils. Therefore the fear of the spirits began to cease among them and the practice of sacrifices to appease the spirits was done

away with. In this connection, M. M. Thomas says, “*For the tribal people Christianity came as a liberator from spiritual and social demons. It is christianity that liberated the people from a world view in which they were socially and psychologically enslaved by fear of spirits, however, the belief in the spirit to some extent still continuous.*”<sup>2</sup>

Thirdly, those who accepted christianity began to celebrate christian religious festivals such as Christmas, Easter and Good Friday but abandoned traditional Bodo religious festivals like *Kherai puja*, *Garja puja* etc. and the seasonal festivals like *Domachi* (agricultural festival) and *Bwisagu* (spring festival).<sup>3</sup> The reasons they uphold is that all the Bodo festivals have some base in the Bathou religion which they have denounced. Celebration of such festivals would not make any difference between the christians and the non-christians and while celebrating any Bodo festival rice beer or wine is served. This in fact is not in line with the christian teaching because on such occasions many become undisciplined and obstruct the sanctity of the festivals. Therefore, the Bodo christians avoid all traditional festivals. Fourthly, they have also discontinued customs of observing birth and death ceremonies as they are inconsistent with the doctrines of christianity. The “*shradda*” a post-dead ritual and the use of *sindur* (vermillion) and *sanhka* (a bangles made out of sea shell) together with red coloured bangle worn by the married women have been prohibited.<sup>4</sup> Lastly, the practice of day to day offerings at the altar of Bathou has comes to be replaced by the offerings of the same at the church altar.

## **SOCIAL IMPACT**

### **Prohibition of *zou* (rice beer)**

Bodo society has been beset with certain vices and has subsequently been being looked down upon by other communities. One such vice is the use of *zou* (rice beer). In Bodo society its use has been a tradition during marriage, funerals, harvest and other social functions. If the people are not served with the traditional drink they would become passive, idle and no work can be completed as desired. Besides social disorder of different natures, economic bankruptcy, general health deterioration and

many other problems crop up. The missionaries carefully observed this sorry state of affairs in the Bodo society. They realised that it would create obstacles to the normal growth of christianity. They did not compromise with its use and insisted on the new converts to totally abstain from its use. They advocated to the extent that its use can be termed as an offence equivalent to an ex-communication from the church. Even community drinking during festivities began to cease. They have also discarded chewing of areca nut and smoking. Local christian missionaries like Maniram Basumatary was one who gave counselling to the Bodo Christians to stop using liquor, tobacco and smoking of “beedies”. Initially it was quite difficult to give up the practice but gradually they were able to accept the new life-style.

## **Women Emancipation**

Social evils like bride price, witch crafts, polygamy etc., were in vogue in the Bodo society. The birth of a daughter was considered inconvenient as the girls have to be married off to other families. The customary law of the community also did not allow the girls to inherit the family property. A notion that girls do not bring any gain to the family was widely prevalent. The practice of *phon* or *phon thoka* (bride price) was discouraged among the converts as it equalled to a sale of daughter in marriage. The first step that the missionaries took to counter such menace was to educate the Bodo masses. The missionaries taught the Bodos that everyone is equal in the eye of God. Whether a boy or a girl he/she is born of the flesh and blood of the father and mother out of love for each other. They encouraged education of women. Through education they wanted to elevate the position of women in the society. The introductions of education by the missionaries helped the Bodos realize that education is important for all, irrespective of sex. A section of Bodo women have been uplifted educationally and socially. In many aspects they have been equally advancing with men. They have been able to stand on their own feet freed from any discrimination from others. Even in the church, the Bible education and theological studies are open to women. The church attendance by women increased leaps and bounds. They were found to be more sincere and active.

In some denominations, women were ordained as pastors. Miss Kanan Basumatary of Bodo Evangelical Lutheran Church, Udalguri, was ordained a Bishop in Udalguri. This development had a great bearing on the lives of the Bodo women. It was discovered that the Bodo women of Goalpara subdivision even demanded a separate church in 1917.<sup>5</sup> The practice of female exorcism or witch craft was suppressed because females were subjected to beating and other forms of physical torture.

### **Abolition of child marriage and changes in marriage rituals**

Another area where the christian missionaries had their role was in the abolition of child marriage. It was not a practice in the Bodo society but due to the influence of their Hindu neighbours this evil practice crept into the Bodo society. Girls of around seven to eight years of age used to be given in marriage. While noticing this evil practice the missionaries vehemently opposed and advised the people to completely do away with the system. Accordingly in the later period not only the Bodo Christians but the whole Bodo society opposed the evil practice of child marriage.

Bodo Christians give more priority to religion than any other social customs. Marriage is always held in high reverence as it is believed to be instituted by Christ. Normally christian marriages are conducted in the church where the priests/pastors officiate the rituals. The couples are made to commit into a promise in the name of God and in the presence of the congregation that they would live together in all situations till death. Some denominations such as the Catholic Church arrange pre-marriage counselling to give knowledge on the importance of conjugal life. It is held in the church unlike the traditionalists who hold it at home. After the completion of the religious rituals in the church, the couple are taken back to the bride's house where a reception is thrown for the invited guests. Then by the end of the day, the bride is traditionally bid farewell. On arrival at the grooms house, the bride is traditionally received followed by a brief prayer service where in the mother-in-law

accepts her in public as a daughter-in-law in the family. The other activities of the marriage remain the same like other non-Christian Bodos. In Christian society polygamy and polyandry are not accepted.

### **Emergence of new village character**

With Christianity coming into the Bodo society certain changes in the belief system came into being and this changed the village character. In order to facilitate themselves in religious practices each village built a church. They began to hold regular worship services and Sunday school classes. In every Christian village a school and a church came into existence. Pastors, catechists were appointed to preside over every religious function and to advise and guide the faithful in the village. Some villages even constituted councils where the village elders assembled to settle disputes in the villages. Northern Evangelical Lutheran Church (N.E.L.C) started a society called Lutheran World Service India Trust in 1996 and through this society, village development councils were formed to help the villagers who were in need of assistance. The religious activities in the village considerably changed the village structure giving rise to a new village character.

### **Preservation of culture and identity**

Conversion of the Bodos into Hinduism had manifold negative impact on the Bodo society. The most glaring example being the disintegration of the Bodo society into a number of social castes such as Koch, Sarania etc and their assimilation with the Hindu Assamese speaking fold. In this connection Becker observed that efforts were made to assimilate the Bodos into the Hindu fold by the process of Sanskritization. He further said, *“The long reign of the Ahoms in Assam gradually paved the way for Hinduism as the established religion. The old faith and customs began to be considered odd, backward and of lower level culture. In vain did the tribal priests try to call a halt to the innovations. The new order destroyed the old tradition.”*<sup>6</sup> To assert the development Down quoted Srinivas, *“Slowly a number of*

*tribal groups were assimilated into the Brahmanism Hindu system-the process that Srinivas called Sanskritization. This happened to the plain dwelling people of Tibeto-Burman stock in Assam.*"<sup>7</sup> The Hindu converts began to consider themselves higher than the other Bodos after being influenced by the concept of caste hierarchy of Hinduism.

Bodo society is an egalitarian society. It does not give any special status to any group or individual. The concept of equality of all human beings instilled by the missionaries helped in realizing that they were inferior to none in the society. This prevented the Bodo society from further disintegration. Conversion into christianity also checked the infringement in the population figure of the Bodos. In 1881 one census official remarked "the separation of the Hindus as an ethnological class is open to objection that it includes a large number who are not Aryans"<sup>8</sup> Linguistically also conversion of the Bodos into Hinduism undermined the Bodo language because they gave up their mother tongue and spoke Assamese language especially among the Ek-Saran dharma followers. But christianity has been helping its followers to preserve and enrich one's own mother tongue and identity. In this connection Issac Basumatary noted, "*It was at this juncture that Christianity came among the Bodos to save and preserve their cultural identity and self respect as tribal while the process of Sanskritization was at its peak. It is to be admitted that Christianity also did not seek to preserve some traditional life styles of the Bodos as tribal but its advent put a halt to a complete Sanskritization at several places. However Christianity encouraged religious attainment through one's own language and culture.*"<sup>9</sup>

Bodo Christians were also concerned for the preservation of traditional musical instruments. In the early stage they nearly abandoned all traditional music and dances because these were related to Bathou religion. In this respect Khiren Borgoyary has mentioned that "*Bodo Christians use all the traditional musical instruments of Bodo Kachari including Kham which were discarded*"<sup>10</sup> because the educated Bodo Christians began to retrospect and revived their use. Dr. R. N Mosahary supplemented it saying "*staging of Bagrumba dance in Shillong on 4<sup>th</sup> February 1986 on the occasion of historic visit of Pope Paul John II is an instance support by the Christian Missionaries in promoting Bodo folk dance.*"<sup>11</sup> Catholic Church Barama has a contribution to this end. Barama Swdwmsri Harimu Afat a cultural cell of Barama Catholic Church was established in 1996. Its objective was to preserve and promote

Bodo culture. *Basiram Jwhwlao* a historical Bodo cultural film was produced and released by it. It also produced two cassettes depicting Kherai music and dances.<sup>12</sup> 'Boroni Dengko' a folk song bearing christian theme and elements composed by the local masters as well as the missionaries with traditional musical instruments begun to be sung on the occasions of weddings, congregation meetings and all the other social and religious festivals and ceremonies.<sup>13</sup>

The Bodo Christians also had nearly given up their traditional dress and costumes. They accepted that a few western elements have cropped into their systems but most of the traditional practices have been retained. They keep wearing their traditional dress and have not stopped rearing and spinning eri-cocoons. Here Khiren Borgoyary says, "...Bodo Christians are preserving their traditional culture. They use their traditional dress and have not stopped rearing and spinning eri-cocoons. Bodo women are still continuing the act of wearing and their household requirements and attractive fashionable dresses are woven by themselves."<sup>14</sup>

The efforts of the missionaries to evangelize among the Bodos caused some disturbances to the existing age old practices which were not well accepted but in the course of time these activities proved to benefit the Bodo society.

## **EDUCATIONAL IMPACT**

Evangelization was a beginning of new era in the history of the Bodo Christians in particular and the Bodos in general as better days could be seen in the Bodo Christian areas while education was in steady progress, superstition suppressed and economy in better condition. The missionaries knew that the root cause of the backwardness and subsequent exploitation of the Bodos by the advanced communities was the mass illiteracy. Knowing fully how the education can have an impact on a society, the christian missionaries took up the challenge in right earnest. Even by 19<sup>th</sup> century Bodos were pre-literate people. C.B. Firth says, "*Education and Christianity came to be closely identified. The schools were not only primary agents of evangelization but also of a new order.*"<sup>15</sup> The establishment of educational institutions in rural areas with English and Assamese medium of instructions helped to grow an educated elite consisting of Christian and non-Christian members. These

educated elite exposed themselves to the world and began to introspect. They felt the necessity to re-discover their resources in all respects and reconstruct their society. There was an earnest effort to spread education among the Bodos.

Education is one that gives a person all the necessary tools and awareness to acquire new skills and knowledge. It is an investment that a family can make for its children. Had it not been for the christian missionaries, Bodos would have remained still isolated and backward. Therefore with new mission stations, the missionaries established schools especially in several areas where no school existed before. Their objective was to change the whole view of the society through education. It is said *'the introduction of modern education by the missionaries ushered modern world view among the tribal people.'*<sup>16</sup> The mission schools became the mission for change. They sowed the gospel, established churches and provided a new world view. People began to acquire knowledge on science, politics, economics, technology etc. This world view was further disseminated by the students in return. The language they adopted became a common language used in literature and churches. The opening of new schools linked children of different villages speaking different dialects. These schools helped promote new relationship among the villages. This resulted in solidifying the entire Bodo tribe.

Christianity is a religion that co-ordinates and synthesises diversities and bring considerable change. Another change we witness was the change of attitude of the parents towards their daughters. There used to be time when daughters used to be discriminated in many areas such as education, inheritance etc. There was a common belief that it was a loss for the family if their daughters were educated because after marriage she would bring gain to the husband's family and not to the parents. When a Bodo pastor was asked about the girl's education he replied 'A son inherits the property of his parents but the poor daughter would go away to her husband's place and wouldn't share the property of the parents.' Missionary schools were opened for both boys and girls. The products of these schools began to have progressive outlook. The parents not only sent their children whether boy or a girl to schools but also allowed the daughters to inherit the parental properties. There were several educated women who equally participated in social activities. They also assumed important responsibilities in society. Education has indeed become an agent of change in the



society. With the advancement of science and technology and education making its headway the mindset of the Bodos assumed more rationality to superstition.

## LITERARY IMPACT

The evangelization work of the missionaries had far reaching impact on the literary aspect of the Bodo society. They did not have a script which could be expressed in written forms. Written literature for the Bodos is a recent development. The history of the Bodo literature began only in late 19<sup>th</sup> century when the christian missionaries began working among the Bodos. In 1864, the Anglican Church opened a mission centre at Tezpur to propagate the gospel message among the Bodos by publishing several leaflets. This was the first missionary literary activity on the Bodo literature. These missionaries published books on religion, songs, tales, rhymes etc. Mention may be made of the works of Rev. Sydney Endle's 'The Kacharis', 'The Grammar of the Bodo Language', the translation of the Bible into Bodo language, folk tales like '*Doima Doisani Khurang*', '*Sase Olsiya Gothoni Khurang*', '*Bamun aro Sakorni Khurang*', '*Raona-Raoni*', '*Abrani Khurang*' etc., and J.D. Anderson's collection of Bodo Kachari tales and rhymes. Rev. Sidney Endle also compiled a number of Bwisagu songs based on love for Bodo bachelors and maidens.<sup>17</sup> Following is an example-

1. Agoi, Boisagi, faida nang.

Dana bathor janai-khai rang zagan zang.

### Free English translation:

Sister Boisagi, come out and play

This is our Bihu holiday

Let's celebrate and dance

2. Dang-daliya, dangdaliya

Mozang- Mozang Gan-bla-ba

Nang-kho nang-li-ya; nang-li-ya

### Free English translation:

Oh dull one, dull one

Even if you put on gorgeously

I won't take you

These written published works laid to the foundation of Bodo literature. Sekhar Brahma writes, *“Whatever the motive might be there behind such noble purpose it cannot be denied that the missionaries had unique contribution in consolidating the very foundation of the Bodo language and literature.”*<sup>18</sup>

The christian missionaries also discovered that the Bodo language has several dialects and rich oral folk elements. They recorded them in written forms and later got them published. One may be of the opinion that the Bodo literature was born within the matrices of the activities of the christian missionaries. Inspired and motivated the Bodos on their own ventured to publish souvenir and mouth piece in Bodo using Roman script. The publications of the magazine *Bibar* (1924), a quarterly magazine published as an organ of the Assam Boro students' conference, the *Alongbar*, *Okhaphwr*, *Sonaki*, *Orkhi*, the *Aronai* etc. This trend evolved an attitude to search for more about their language and literature. The old sages, romance, folktales, folk songs, legends, myths etc which were given written forms by the missionaries had access by the educated elite and enlightened the younger generation to save their cultural identity, political rights and self respect.

After several decades Bodo language came to be recognised as an official language. Further introduction of Bodo as medium of instruction in schools and colleges, introduction of Bodo programmes in the All India Radio, Gauhati station, and of late in the Door Darshan Kendra, Gauhati, and inclusion of Bodo language in the 8<sup>th</sup> schedule of the Indian constitution, introduction of Bodo as an optional subject in the Union Public Service examinations speak volumes of the development of the Bodo language.

This development in literature led to a sense of Bodo national identity. This sense of new identity partially became a factor for modern political movements for the Bodos.

## HEALTH AND HYGIENE

In the field of health the contribution of the missionaries was so immense that it changed the whole belief system of healing the sick. For the Bodos any sickness or natural calamities such as famine, earthquake, flood etc. were thought to be caused by malevolent evil spirit.<sup>19</sup> In order to appease them offerings of pigs, poultry, rice etc. were made. The christian missionaries knowing fully the ignorance of the Bodos on the causes of diseases and their identification of the same with the evil spirits took the state of affairs as a challenge and part and parcel of negotiating such beliefs through the christian ministry. They gave them a new world view and philosophy which changed their age old beliefs. The concept of malevolent evil spirit was corrected with the knowledge that the diseases were caused by infection, bacteria etc. They proved them with blood test, stool, spectrum, urine etc. instead of taking the sick to the village priest. They taught them to take the sick to the doctors in dispensaries, hospitals which the missionaries established. Women were taught to wash before cooking, wash the kitchen daily, pray before meals, wash hand before meals, clean the livestock, wear clean dress etc.<sup>20</sup> Personal hygiene and cleanliness were given importance by all members. Women were taught how to take care of the child and breast feed. They performed domestic work and shared in the family income. They ceased preparing rice beer and the abstinence of its consumption become norm for the Bodo Christians. In fact the Bodo Christian women were in much better position than several other communities. Olav Hodne said that *even the leprosy patients were cured because of better drugs and returned home for better living.*<sup>21</sup> This completely changed the previous belief that the leprosy was a curse for the sins committed. People understood that leprosy was not a curse from God but only a disease like any other diseases which is curable. The missionaries opened leprosy centres and provided both physical and spiritual nourishment to the patients. Thus through the humanitarian service the superstitious beliefs of the Bodos were abolished. This saved the lives of many Bodos and helped them to live happily.

## POLITICAL IMPACT

It is well accepted that education and literature were the main factors that led people to introspect themselves. History speaks volumes of the rich heritage of the Bodos but with the loss of political power and later conversion and assimilation with the greater Assamese fold they began to lose their self identity but the establishment of educational institutions and literary works on culture, language and customs enabled the Bodos to understand their genius and ethos and they applied the knowledge to their terms. Their sense of history, geography, language and political power aroused in them the sentiment to love their land and community. The song below point towards this end:

1. Angni mojang hadar  
 Aini mojang hador  
 Bakhnaijathong  
 Biphaphorni dongmon, gothphorni jagan  
 Hajniphrai doism mojang hador,  
 O' onplaigra Isor  
 Nongiyao ang bidong  
 Onjagra hadorkhou naihordo onnaoi  
 Boro phorkhou bor ho, ongra Isor.

### Free English translation:

My beloved Lord  
 Mother's beloved land  
 Be praised  
 Belonged to fathers, shall be all children  
 Beautiful from hills to rivers  
 Oh kind the God  
 I'm praying before thee from heart  
 be kind to oversee the kind the beloved land  
 Bless the Bodo, kind the God

2. Jonomniphrai monbal jong Boroni namkhou

Mugoi jabal jong rongoi-rayoikhai,  
 Daosa maoriya badi jubra  
 Janangbai jonlai<sup>22</sup>

**Free English translation:**

Begot the name Bodo since our birth  
 We've been hated being illiterate- uneducated  
 Feeble as newborn chicks  
 We've turned

The formation of the Bodo Students' Union with the initiative of Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma in 1919, submission of a memorandum to the Simon Commission on 3<sup>rd</sup> February 1928, representing the Bodo community demanding a separate category for the Bodos in the census report and a separate representative in the council of the christian missionary were the impact of the literary works of the missionaries. In the opinion of Mr. Manik Brahma and Subungsa Mushahary, "Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma pioneered the political agenda of the Bodos."<sup>23</sup> The 12 points memorandum submitted under Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma's leadership gained much significance throughout the Bodo political movements in the years that followed.<sup>24</sup> The formation of the All Bodo Students' Union on national level on 15<sup>th</sup> February 1967,<sup>25</sup> a common political platform for the Plains Tribal's Council of Assam on 27<sup>th</sup> February 1967,<sup>26</sup> the demand for Udayachal in 1967, further the demand for Bodoland with a slogan to divide Assam 50/50, raising of militant Bodo Volunteer Force and later the Bodoland Liberation Tigers Force on 18<sup>th</sup> June 1996,<sup>27</sup> the emergence of insurgent organization Bodo Security Force on 3<sup>rd</sup> October 1986, later re-christened as National Democratic Front of Bodoland in 1994, were all motivated by the literary works of the christian missionaries and other Bodo educated elite.<sup>28</sup> The main objectives of these organizations were to secure protection and develop the socio-economic structure, culture, language and literature and gain political autonomy for the Bodos. In all these movements there were enlightened christian youths who took up the leadership. Mention may be made of a few individuals such as Hiracharan Narzinary from North Bengal, Binay Khungur Basumatary from Harisinga, Pradip Daimary, Rihon Daimari, Ranjan Daimari,

Govinda Chandra Basumatary from Udalguri area, Promila Rani Brahma, Reo Reo Narzary from Kokrajhar, Emmanuel Mochahary and Derhasar Mochahary from Baksa district.

## **ECONOMIC IMPACT**

Man is a social being and cannot be separated from his economic and cultural implications. When the christian missionaries introduced new agricultural methods the Bodos were affected too. The Australian Baptist missionaries introduced tractors to plough and used high yielding seeds and showed the path for better yield even though it was not immediate because simple Bodos could not afford to go for a tractor nor could they have access to high yielding seeds.<sup>29</sup> This was a positive contribution to the economic life of the Bodos. Further by restricting the use of liquor and controlling the expenditure in the marriages Bodos were saved from going bankrupt. Thus restriction on excessive expenditure and practicing thriftiness instilled in them a skill to do business other than agriculture. Milton Sangma is of the opinion that the Bodo christians became competitive in spirit and went out for uncharted business to earn better income for better living standard.<sup>30</sup> Prior to the advent of the missionaries Bodos were not exposed to or did not take up any trade or business. They were much confined to their own traditional life styles and of course with much content. Christianity opened the eyes of the Bodos through the educational institutions in their own land. The technical and formal education equipped many Bodo youth to get engaged in public and private firms and industries. Although the overall economic condition of the Bodos is not sound, a new privileged class economically better off having high social position has emerged. This has resulted in a new economic structure and orientation completely different from the traditional economic structure.

## **NEGATIVE IMPACT**

The activities of the christian missionaries were also viewed from both positive and negative ends. To begin with, with the acceptance of christianity, Bodo society came to be divided between christians and non-christians and further divisions

among the christians belonging to different denominations who could not come together for a common community purpose. Each religion and denomination asserted its own stand.

Secondly, although the missionaries did not discard the Bodo traditional culture of respecting their elders by touching their feet, they introduced a new culture among the Bodos, that is, the shaking of hands. This suppressed the traditional culture of touching the feet as the sign of respect among the christians as well as among the non-christians. The missionaries assumed the cultural values and tradition in the Bodo society as something not worth considering. All these developments were looked upon by many Bodos as anti-native propaganda and attempt to eliminate the Bodo culture. This aroused hatred and opposition to christianity among the intellectual Hinduized leaders of the Bodos and other religious sects. This attitude was injected into the heart of the common people to consider christianity as a foreign religion, an intruder against the sacredness and the unity of the traditional Bodo society.<sup>31</sup>

Thirdly, the primary motive of the christian missionaries was to enlighten them with the gospel of Christ. To fulfil this, the missionary established school, hospitals and produced literature. The introduction of religious teachings in the mission schools and adoption of Roman Script for the Bodo language made a few Hinduized intellectual Bodos to be hostile towards missionary activities. The Bodo leaders did not want religious teachings of a particular religion in the schools and also wanted to adopt Assamese script for the Bodo language rather than Roman script. The attempt of some of the Bodo leaders to establish a Swaraj School<sup>32</sup> against the mission schools was one of the live examples of their hostility towards missionary activities. This greatly restricted the Bodo people from accepting christianity.

Fourthly, the innovative contributions of Christian missionaries such as education, literature, upgrading of Bodo language into writing and restrictions on some social practices in the Bodo society had transformed the Bodo society's lifestyle but the introduction of new cultures such as abstinence from rice beer, replacement of Bodo musical instruments with that of western ones such as guitar, organ etc., religious instructions in the mission schools disregard of the traditional Bodo dances and social festival etc were looked upon by many Bodos as anti Bodo culture.

Fifthly, the early missionaries particularly the A.B.M missionaries did not motivate the christian Bodos to become self-reliant from the day of conversion. They thought that the new converts would be offended if they were taught about giving or contributing for church activities. This made the Bodo christian dependent on mission help. It was Rev. I. J. Stoneton (1964-1968) who first seriously thought about self-reliance. It was only by 1980-1981 that the Bodo churches really learned about giving and self-support.

Sixthly, another area where the missionaries failed was to provide an alternative to traditional healer. The missionary should have been able to provide some alternative healing of the sick by a traditional healer before condemning it.

Seventhly, it is to be stated that not all the Bodos were polygamous. Early missionaries did not grant right of conversion to a polygamous man until he had divorced the rest keeping just one with whom he was pleased. This created social complicity. The divorced wife (or wives) was deprived of her needs both physical and materials. Unable to adequately look after herself and her young children she often turned either a beggar or sold her body. Children of such family became anti-social elements. It has been also found out that often a polygamous man embraced christianity just to get rid of his other wives.

Lastly, the Bodos have rich traditional dances, musical instruments and festivals. It was the attitude of the christian missionaries that all that existed before their arrival were evil and should be radically replaced. The reason obviously was that these missionaries had a highly developed sense of christian religion and refused to admit anything as religion that did not closely correspond to their own concept of religion. But the Bodos had their own religion which had been in practice since time immemorial. They had their own concept of religion like any other religions. Such attitude of the christian missionaries was vehemently detested by the people and they distanced themselves from the christian missionaries.

The impact of christianity was felt in every aspect of the Bodo society. While trying to reach out people with gospel message several other activities had to be undertaken benefitting on, who had come in contact with them directly or indirectly. Every development be it on community or individual was the fruit of the contribution made by the christian missionaries.



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## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup>Nijendra Basumatary, Farmer, Vill- Aflagaon, Dist- Kokrajhar BTAD (Assam), Age- 68 years, 12/07/2015 (An Informant).
- <sup>2</sup> C.B Firth, *An Introduction To Indian History*, Indian Society For Promoting Christian Knowledge (ISPCK), Delhi, 2012 (Reprint), p. 277.
- <sup>3</sup>Haricharan Basumatary President, Boro Baptist Church Association, Tukrajhar, Dist- Chirang, BTAD (Assam), Age- 66 years, 12/11/15 (An informant).
- <sup>4</sup>Jwngma Goyary, Asst. Teacher, Don Bosco School, Ramfalbil, P.O- Ramfalbil, Dist- Kokrajhar (Assam), Age-35 years 20/6/2017 (An informant).
- <sup>5</sup>Sucheta Sen Chauduri, *The Bodo Movement and Women's Participation*, Mittal Publication, New Delhi, 2004, p.57.
- <sup>6</sup> Becker Christopher, *Early History of the Catholic Mission in North East India: 1598- 1890*, Trans. and Ed. by F. Leicht and S. Kartemprel, Sacred heart college, 1989, pp. 55-56, cited by *The Impact of Christianity on the Bodo Society with special reference to Gaurang, Tukrajhar and Bentol Mission Stations of Present Kokrajhar district of Assam*, unpublished B. Div thesis submitted to Gurukul Lutheran Theological College and Research Institution, Chennai, 1996, p.33.
- <sup>7</sup>Fredrick S. Downs, *Op. Cit.* 1992, p. 143.
- <sup>8</sup>Census report of India, Assam, Social and Cultural C-VII and C-III Second part Govt of India New Delhi 1973.
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- <sup>10</sup>KhirenBorgoyary, "A brief Account of the Bodos and the Advent of Christianity among the Bodos in North East India", KhohenIslary, (ed.), *Souvenir, Youth Golden Jubilee celebration 27<sup>th</sup>- 39<sup>th</sup> December, 2005*, Boro Christian Literature Board, Tukrajhar, 2005, p.69
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