

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The study of religion has become important in today's context as it is believed to regulate individual, family and community life in general which also shapes the behaviour, action, social norms and ethics of people. It also determines food habit, organization of institutions, decision-making and exercise of socio-economic life of people. Changes in the society and organization are also motivated by religion. Therefore, religion is a system of belief as well as an agent of value enforcement and action. In the opinion of Dr. Sekhar Brahma, *"From the primitive age to the modern; religion has played a very significant role in moulding the socio-cultural life of the Bodo people. The social institutions of the Bodos are interwoven and interrelated with their religion and in the traditional agrarian society, every sphere of life of a Bodo man or woman is guided by rites and rituals of his/her religion. Religion has also played a dominant role in changing their social pattern and status, economy, mode of living and way of thinking and it has led to achieving higher education and modernization of the society."*¹

Christianity has made its inroads into the belief system of a large section of the Bodos. Therefore it draws one's attention as to how more than 9% (as per census 2011) of Bodo population converted to christianity. An idea has been framed on Christian mission and its impact on Bodo society. However, there are a few terms to be defined which will provide an insight into the research's perception and issues such as christianity, christian mission, christian missionaries and the Bodos.

The teachings and miracles associated with Jesus form the basis of christianity. It is also known as an Abrahamic monotheistic religion based on the life and teachings of Jesus Christ, who is the focal point of the christian faith. It is the

largest religion in the world. As of the early 21st century, christianity has more than 2.4 billion adherents. Christian Mission is an organized effort to spread christianity. Christian mission involves sending of individuals and group, called missionaries, across boundaries for the purpose of converting people to christianity or from one christian tradition to another.² Mission of the Church is to confront injustice and alleviate sufferings and to express God's love for the world. Now missionary/missionaries is/are person or persons sent by a Church into an area to carry out evangelization or preaching of gospel to convert people to Christianity or the truth path of life as sanctioned by the Bible. He/she/they are commissioned by the organization to make followers of Christ.

Today Bodo christians belong to different denominations such as the Roman Catholic Church, the Church of North India, the Baptist, the Northern Evangelical Lutheran Church, the Scottish Presbyterian Church, the Seventh Day Adventist, the Christian Revivalist Church and the Believers Church. The present study focuses on the advent of five different denominations among the Bodos viz. the Baptist Church, the Anglican Church, the Scottish Presbyterian Church, the Lutheran Church and the Catholic Church.

As per the population census report of 2011,³ the total christian population in India is estimated at 2.78 crore. The Assam census report of 2011⁴ reported the total population of Assam as 31,205,576, out of which the christians were 1,165,867 (3.74%).The census report of 2011 shows the total population of the Bodos as 18, 38,000 where the Hindu population shares 90.1% and the christians 9.7%.⁵

ORIGIN

In the absence of sufficient material sources historians to relied more on the narrations of the Vedas, the Epics and the Puranas. Referring to the Sanskrit texts the two epics the Mahabharata and the Ramayana and also the Puranas Bodos, it is known that the earliest inhabitants of Assam were the Mlecches, Kiratas and Cinas. Suniti Kumar Chatterji says that mention of Kiratas is found in the Yajurveda, Arthaveda, Yogini Tantra, in the Pali Malinda-Panha and the Greek work Periplus of the Erythrean Sea.⁶ The account in the Mahabharata mentions the region which makes up

present day Assam along with territories adjacent to Assam made up 'Pragjyotisha'. The Kirata and the Chinese lived there.

Sydney Endle a missionary writer noted "in feature and in general appearance they approximate very closely to the Mongolian type and this would seem to point to Tibet and China as the original home of the race."⁷ Further, he observes that the Bodos migrated to Assam and the Brahmaputra valley from their homeland Tibet and China and settled in the present Assam.⁸ According to the Edward Gait, the Bodos were regarded as earliest known inhabitants of the Brahmaputra valley.⁹ Debabrata Dutta also calls the great Bodos as one of the earliest aboriginal tribes of the Brahmaputra valley.¹⁰ Therefore from several sources it is established that the Bodos are one of the earliest settlers of Assam belonging to the great ancient mongoloid family.

Today they are spread all over Assam, North Bengal, in a few pockets of Nepal and Bangladesh with main concentration in the North of the Brahmaputra river covering the areas up to the foot hills of Bhutan and Arunachal Pradesh and also in the southern bank of the Brahmaputra river. Present Bodos, Boroks, Deuris, Hajongs, Rabhas, Dimasas, Tiwas, Sonowals and Thengals are of the same race and same ancestry.

POLITICAL HISTORY

The first royal kingdom in Assam referred to is to be found in the famous Allahabad Pillar inscription. In this inscription Assam was a frontier kingdom which had to pay tribute to Samudragupta. The royal kingdom was Kamrupa founded by Pushyavarman, a contemporary of Samudragupta. Records prove that he claimed his lineage from Bhagadatta, who is believed to be an ancient Bodo king. Ajoy Roy observes in this connection, "No Aryan king would like to claim his lineage from a non-Aryan Mlechha or Asura king."¹¹ "Varman is a common title adapted by the aboriginal converts to Hinduism...." observed Edward Gait.¹² The last King of the Varman dynasty was Bhaskar Varman. In 1912, in a copper plate inscription at Nidhanpur in the Panchakhanda pargana of Sylhet in Bangladesh a record of grant of land by Bhaskar Varman was found.¹³ Bhaskar Varman was a powerful ruler who

extended his territories to northern and eastern Bengal. He was even able to help his friend Harshavardhan in vanquishing Sansanka, the ruler of Gauda, who had defeated Harshavardhana in the previous battle. A detailed account of the reign of Bhaskar Varman is found in Tsi-yu-ki, the record of the Chinese traveller Hiuen Tsang who visited Kamrupa in around 640 A.D.¹⁴ Bhaskar Varman had no heir as he remained a bachelor. After his death Avanti Varman a relative ascended the throne and assumed a new name called Salastambha. The last king of the Salastambha dynasty was Bala Varman who is recorded to have reigned till 910 A.D. Following this dynasty, came the Pala dynasty started by Brahmapala. He was a peace loving ruler and no record of any exploit is found recorded. His son Ratnapala, was different from his father as he had fought with the rulers of Gauda, Gujarat, Kerela and the Deccan. He reigned for a pretty long period. Indrapala is said to be last king of the Pala dynasty.

In the medieval period by the second half of the century, Kamrupa might have lost the significance as it enjoyed earlier as several Bodo chiefs had established kingdoms in different part of the region. The period also witnessed the invasion of the Kamrupa by Md. Bakhtyar Khilji. Ghiya-ud-ddin the Governor of Bengal also invaded Assam in 1227. Several Mughal invasions also displaced the Bodo rulers. In 1228 A.D came the Ahoms. In fact relying on the Buranjis of the Ahom period the political condition of the Bodos can be assessed. The Chutias an offshoot of the Bodo race too established their kingdom at Sadiya in the 13th century. Another Bodo dynasty that emerged was that of the Kachari in the Dhansiri valley with its capital at Dimapur.

Here after, no authentic sources are available on the political history of the Bodos except a few instances of memorandum submitted by a few Bodo leaders in the first half of the 20th century. After independence, the government of Assam constituted the Belts and Blocks in order to safeguard and protect tribal lands from alienation and encroachment by other communities.¹⁵ On 20th February 1993, representatives of the Central government, the Assam government and the A.B.S.U and B.P.A.C signed an agreement called the 'Bodo Accord' which brought into being the Bodo Autonomous Council. It was an important day in the history of the Bodo movement because on this day the six year long political movement of the A.B.S.U-B.P.A.C formally came to an end.¹⁶

On the basis of the Bodo Accord, the Bodo Autonomous Council was formed on 20th February 1993 comprising 2570 villages of seven districts Kokrajhar, Nalbari, Barpeta, Bongaigaon, Darrang, Mongoldai and Sonitpur.¹⁷ The Bodo representative had included another 95 villages in the B.A.C region. The demand was however not accepted then. The Bodo Autonomous Council was given economic power to accelerate local area development. But the state of Assam retained the home, security and revenue departments. Within three years of the conclusion of the agreement, A.B.S.U began to feel that the B.A.C had failed to meet the aspirations of the Bodos and went on to revive the demand for a separate state. So, the people again began to think of a separate state and the Bodo Accord became meaningless. In May 2000, a dialogue was initiated between the armed outfit, B.L.T (Bodo Liberation Tiger) and the Central Government. On 10th February 2003, after several rounds of talks between the B.L.T and the Central and the state governments, a memorandum of settlement was signed in New Delhi. It is known as the 'Bodoland Territorial Council Accord'.¹⁸ After the negotiated surrender of B.L.T and the formation of the Bodo Territorial Council, the armed struggle waged by the B.L.T since 1996, came to an end.

The Bodo Territorial Council was formed in the state of Assam with an area of 8970 square kilometres. The goal of the Council as envisioned was the rapid economic, educational, and agricultural and socio-cultural development of the region and protection and promotion of the ethnic identity as guaranteed under the sixth schedule of the constitution. On 7th December 2003, the 12 member interim Bodo Territorial Council was sworn in the presence of Deputy Prime Minister, L.K Advani and Tarun Gogoi, Chief Minister of Assam. With this accord some of the political aspirations of the Bodos were fulfilled. But the demand for a separate state was retained with the N.D.F.B, an insurgent outfit demanding a separate country for the Bodos still being at large. It was on 27th January 2020 Bodo Territorial Council's Autonomy was further extended by an agreement signed between the central governments and the N.D.F.B and today Bodoland is officially known as, Bodoland Territorial Region (B.T.R).

LANGUAGES

B. H. Hodgson, used for the first time the term *Bodo* as the generic name for the people of this language group.¹⁹ Since then for all literary purposes the term Bodo has been used by different authors indiscriminately. Today the use of term Bodo has gained importance as the Bodo language has been recognized in the 8th schedule of the Indian constitution with the nomenclature Bodo and for all literary and official purposes its use have become essential. Hence the term Bodo, finds its importance and preference in the study.

Linguistically, the Bodos include a large group of people who speak the Tibeto- Burman speeches. They are Bodos or Boro of the Brahmaputra valley, Meches of lower Assam and West Bengal, Rabhas, Garos, Dimasa, Tiperas, Lalungs, Sonowals, Hajongs, Deuris, Chutias etc.²⁰ The Linguistic Survey of India describes the Bodos or the Bodo-Kachari as a member of the Bodo sub-section under the Assam-Burma group of the Tibeto-Burman branch of the Sino-Tibeto-Chinese speech family.²¹ Dr. P.C Bhattacharya in one of his articles, “A few Elements of the Indo-Mongoloid Boro Culture”, says: The Bodo language share some common features in respect of vocabulary, phonology, morphology and syntax with other sister languages of the Bodo group.²² Sidney Endle characterizes the Bodo languages as ‘agglutinative’ as distinct from the inflexional family of languages.²³ The language does not preserve any written record of the glorious past of the race, which indicates that the languages remained, confined to its spoken form only until recent past. But Bishnu Prasad Rabha, the renowned poet and artist of Assam told that in ancient times there was a kind of Deodhai script among the Bodo linguistic group. He gathered a few specimen of Deodhai alphabet from an informant of Dimapur, which was noted for the Kachari reign and remains representing the art and architecture.²⁴ However, at one time Bodo was a very powerful language, which was inflexional in nature, spread over the North-eastern region, some parts of Nepal, Bangladesh and foothills of Bhutan. Various names of places, rivers, rivulets and streams prove this fact beyond doubt. In Bodo languages *di*, *doi* or *ti* means water and that is how most of the streams, places, rivulets and rivers still bear names starting with the prefix *di*, *doi* or *ti* for example *Dihong*, *Dihing*, *Dikhow*, *Digaro*, *Dimapur*, *Dibrugarh*, *Maibong*, *Teesta*.²⁵

The subsequent formation of the 'Bodo Sahitya Sabha' in 1952 is a direct legacy of this literary campaign launched under the Brahma Movement of which Guru Kalicharan Brahma was the main architect. At present Bodo literature has been growing rapidly and 'Bodo Sahitya Sabha' is making considerable effort in publishing Bodo literary works covering all fields-short story, fiction, drama, poetry etc. In the aftermath of socio-political awakening and movement launched by the Bodo leaders, the language was introduced as the medium of instruction in the schools in the Bodo-dominated areas of Assam in 1963. Today the language has been recognized as an associate language in the state of Assam and has been accorded as the medium of instruction up to the secondary level since 1968. The language has attained a position of pride with the opening of post graduate courses in Bodo languages and literature at Gauhati University in 1996.²⁶ Of course, the language is yet to solve the problem of standard spelling and grammar. The Devanagiri script is being used for the Bodo languages for more than two decades after that language have been included in the 8th Schedule of the Indian constitution.²⁷ It has brought new hopes and promises for literary and linguistic development.

SOCIAL LIFE

The Bodos are naturally peace loving people. Honesty, simplicity and truthfulness are the ornaments of their character. B.H. Hodgson has described the Bodos as, *"Amiable, intelligent, docile and free from prejudices, they are honest, truthful in deeds and words. They are steady and industrious; they are devoid of all violence towards their own people and their neighbours. They are free from arrogance, revenge and cruelty. To wine not enslaved. To power they have no temptation. They consider all equal. They are good husbands, good father and good sons. They are hospitable to their own people and never averse to strangers."*²⁸

The social structure of the Bodos is primarily patriarchal. The father is the supreme head of the family. After the death of the father, the eldest son, along with the widow mother assumes the responsibility of the family.²⁹ According to customs, sons inherit the paternal properties but in the absence of a male heir, daughters inherit the paternal property. Bodo Kacharis are egalitarian and hence in the sphere of

household problem the mothers also play dominant role. P.C. Bhattacharya also rightly says that “*the Bodo social structure is primarily patriarchal with a few elements of matriarchal characteristics.*”³⁰

Rev. Sydney Endle also supports the view when he write, “*Among the Kachar women do not perhaps occupy quite the same influential position as seems to be enjoyed by their sisters in the Khasi hills, where something like a matriarchate apparently holds the field of social and domestic life. Still in this interesting race, the position of the wife and mother is far from being a degraded one. The Kachari husband usually treats his wife with distinct respect and regards her as an equal and companion to an expert. As matrons, the wives enjoy a large measure of freedom.*”³¹ The society is organized under the three organizations: village organization, area organization and district organization.

The social life of the Bodos is a well organized one. They maintain certain rules and regulations in their social life as they do in their households. Community living, team works, fishing, merry making is still prevalent among the Bodos.³² There are certain aspects, which are uniquely preserved by the Bodo society to maintain their social bonds such as *soari janai*, where one notices a particular family inviting his neighbours for free service. Another free and voluntary service to the neighbour is called *aowai janai* that is, free and voluntary service in a rota basis. In practices it is not required to pay for the labour wages to the labours but the owner of the family, offered *zou* (rice beer), and *wngkham* and *oma bedort* (rice and pork) in abundance. In place of *zou*, Christians serve tea these days. According to Sidney Endle, “*Tribal organization of the Kachari (Bara) race rested in early days, very largely at least, on a totemistics basis, although it is only here and there that any real regard for the totems can still be said to survive. In primitive days, these sub-divisions all at one time strictly endogamous were probably very numerous. But in the case of many of these sub-tribes all traces of their distinct existences would seems to have passes away and no restrictions on the intermarriage of members of such-tribes are still survive are any longer recognized.*”³³ According to Kameswar Brahma, The different social groups or aris (clans) were created by *Monsing-sing Borai*, the incarnate one of the supreme God, *Abonglaoree* at certain period when the Bodos lived in indiscipline and unsystematic state of life, to preserve the traditional customs. He opines that the

main groups or *aris* of the Bodos, which are based on specific work or duties, seems to signify some kind of kinship.³⁴

It is believed that the different social groups or *aris* (clans) were created by *Monsing-Sing-Borai* (another name for Bathou), the incarnation of one of the supreme gods. The following are the main groups or *aris* of the Bodos which are based on some specific works or duties. The *ari* seems to signify some kinds of kinship.

The main social groups or *aris* are *Swarga-ari* (Swarga-heaven) the heaven folk, *Basumatari* (Basumati-earth) the earth folk, *Mosahari* (Mosa-tiger) the tiger folk, *Narzary* (Narze-jute) the jute folk, *Doimari* (Doi-big river) the river folk, *Gayari* (Gay- areca nuts) the areca nut folk, *Owari* (Owa-bamboo) the bamboo folk, *Khangkhari* (Khangkhla-kind of plant) the plant folk, *Lahari* (Lai-leaf) the leaf- folk, *Hajoari* (Hajo-hill) the hill dwellers, *Kherkatari* (Kherkata-cutting of thatch) the thatch folk, *Sibingari* (Sibing-Sesame) the Sesame folk, *Sabaiari* (Sabai-kind of pulse) the pulse Sabai folk, *Bibaiari* (Bibai-begging) the begging folk, *Bingiari* (Bingi-string instrument) the string instrument folk, *Mao Marari* (Maomari-the people of Maomari) the Maomari folk, *Ramsiari* (Ramsa-the Kachari people) the Kachari folk, *Sangphramari* (Song + phram-to leave any work half done) the people who had left the rice half cooked, *Phadangari* (Phadang-supplier of the garment), *Islary* (people who were engaged in preparation for the worship of God *Bathou Bwrai* and goddess *Bathou Buri*), *Ganjlerari* (the group of the people that originated from the a man who had eat the ganjler for his hateful behaviour, *Bargawari* or *Bargayari* (the group originated from the man who are engaged as priest (*Deuri* or *Oja*) prays to God *Bathou Bwrai* for blessing), *Thalirari* (the group originated from the person who were engaged to supply banana (*thaler*). Besides the groups mentioned above, the Bodos of the state of West Bengal have some more group. Groups like *Sangphathang*, *Katajari*, *Bamuda*, *Laoari*, *Aeophramari*, *Khakhloari*, etc are to be found among them. The Bodos of the State of Assam are not familiar with these groups.

CULTURE

The Bodo culture is rich and multifaceted. It is part and parcel of the Indo-Mongoloid or Kirata culture. The subject is vast and complicated. The mongoloid

Bodo culture of Assam has, to some extent, influenced the Indic (Indo-Aryan) Assamese culture or vice versa. The different Bodo culture which has influenced and contributed in the development of Assamese culture has been analyzed and discussed by many renowned scholars.

As for as the house building, the Bodos follow certain common tradition. Their main house is built on the northern side of the homestead. The main house is stretched from the west to the east. There are three divisions of the main house with provision of a door facing the south. The easternmost portion (*isin*) of the main house is meant for cooking and worshipping. The courtyard also provides the altar of the *Bathou*, the supreme God, with a *sizu* tree parallel to the easternmost portion of the main house.

The Bodos observe some rituals and ceremonies related to the life cycle like birth, death and marriage. They observe some seasonal, agricultural and religious festivals. *Bwisagu* is the main seasonal festival like Bihu. The term *Bwisagu* has been derived from “Bwisa” which means “year” or “age” and “Agu” means “starting” or start. Hence the word connotes start of the New Year.

Feasting, dancing and merry-making go on for seven days in Bwisagu festival. The young ones dance jovially and sing songs of love and yearning. The middle-aged and the old folk also join them in singing and dancing. This festival is social festival and is observed in the New Year that is Baisak (April). This festival is observed to invite the goddess of nature to come with all her blessings-rain, bright sunshine, and graceful winds thereby brighten the face of the earth. It is believed that in this festival, the goddess comes with all her blessing and fills the society with boundless joy and happiness.³⁵ Also, some of the social ceremonies of the Bodos are *Ongkham Gwrloi Jannai* (first eating of new rice) where a family invites his/her neighbours and friends to share their joy and happiness of eating the new rice and thanksgiving to *Mainao* (Goddess *Laskhmi*).³⁶ Another social ceremony observed by the Bodos is *Bisigi and Bilw gw Khanai* (friend in terms of male) which means binding friendship between male and female of the same age and they address between themselves as *Sukhe* (friends in terms of male) and *Lw gw* (friend in terms of female). Both the ceremonies are associated with festivals or with some happy occasions such as marriage, or during the visit to a new place or village in order to leave behind a special friend. This

ceremony contributes a lot in strengthening of friendship, fellowship, understanding and unity in the society. *Domaci (Magh Bihu or Magw)* and *Katigaca (Kati Bihu)* are the two other major seasonal festivals of the Bodos. These seasonal festivals are invariably linked with the agricultural lore or ritual of the peasant folk. Of the religious festivals current among the Bodos, mention must be made of the Kherai and Garza. The Kherai is the greatest religious festival of the Bodos. It is celebrated for the well being of the people and the harvest.

MARRIAGE

Like any other societies, the marriage is the most important event in the life cycle of the Bodos. Marriage is called *Haba* by the Bodos. In Bodo *ha* means soil or earth and *ba* means to bear something on the back. So, *Haba* means to bear the soil or the responsibility of the earth on the back. By *ha* word *Haba* means to bear a great responsibility. With the marriage ceremony the Bodos give the newly married couple a new lesson which is full of duties and responsibility.³⁷ It is monogamous and one hardly comes across a man with two wives. Marriage with close relatives is prohibited and the practice of divorce is very rare. Both widow and widower can remarry but not to the widow of one's brother or his wife's elder sister. Bride price was in practice in the past, since taking away of one's daughter was considered to be losing something helpful from the family. Sidney Endle says "*The standard of chastity among the Kacharis (Bodo) both men and women, is by no means a low one. As a rule the young people, in the villages at least, lead a pure life before marriage, and are faithful to their marriage vows in afterlife.*"³⁸

Marriage within the various social groups are allowed. There is no child marriage. Dowry system is unknown to them. There is a practice of bride price known as *phon-thaka*. In the past, it is said that it could even be more than rupees one thousand, but gradually, the *phon-thaka* began to be discourage and in the present Bodo society it has become nominal.³⁹

There are as many six different systems of marriage in the Bodo society: *Songnannoi lainai haba* (arranged marriage): In which a bride is selected by the parents of the groom followed by the settlement of the marriage proper. It is socially

accepted marriage. *Gorja lakhinai haba*: In which the groom has to render service at the house of the bride before marriage. *Bwnanwi lainai haba*: In this, the bride is forcefully taken away from her house to the house of the groom before the marriage. It is treated unlawful. *Dokhar langnai haba*: this is the marriage by elopement of the bride and groom. It is treated as irregular marriage. *Dongkha haba*: a widow can marry any man under mutual agreement between the widow and her proposed husband. Another irregular marriage, which is socially recognized, is the widow-remarriage. A widow can remarry any person who is not related to her, but the property of the deceased husband goes to the male child always by the Bodo custom. Sometimes, it is also seen that the widow is allowed to take the female child of her deceased husband along with her to her new husband. There are some restrictions, which are strictly followed by a widower, making him remarry his deceased wife's younger sister; he is obliged conventionally to regard the elder sister in the light of a mother. Similarly, a widow may remarry her deceased husband's younger brother but she is not allowed to remarry the elder brother of her deceased husband. Divorce is allowed in the Bodo society, but with a certain formality.

Sidney Endle says, 'Man and wife appear before the village elders and state their case, concluding by tearing a pan-leaf into two pieces, *fathwi besinai* (Kachari) *pan chira* (Assamese), a symbol of act indicating that, as sundered leaf can never be reunited. So their married life is severed forever.'⁴⁰ If the husband divorces his wife without any reasonable ground then he is to bear the possibility of her livelihood for certain period. Both the divorced man and woman are free to remarry anyone who is not related to him/her.⁴¹

WOMEN

Although the social structure of the Bodo is based on the patriarchal system, the place of women in the Bodo society is very high. If there is no male child in a family then the property is distributed among the daughters. They can enjoy such properties even after their marriage. The Bodo women command respect in the community, their position is never regarded inferior to that of a man. However, birth of a daughter is not favoured as much as that of a son. In such cases of marital

separation, a woman is denied of her rights to have a share of the property of her husband, although she is allowed to take her ornaments. During their maidenhood they enjoy the liberty to participate in singing, dancing and participate in festivals. The married women generally are refrained from outdoor exhibition. The Bodo women are exceedingly industrious and they spend much of their time in the fields working side by side with their husband. The Bodo women are expert weavers and can weave all their weaving apparels. Rev. Sidney Endle remarks on the position of the Bodo women: *“Among the Kacharis, women do not perhaps occupy quite the same influential position as seems to be enjoyed by their sisters in the Khasi Hills, where something like a matriarchal apparently holds the field of social and domestic life. Still, with this interesting race the position of the wife and mother is far from being a degraded one. The Kachari husband and householder have neither sympathy with, nor tolerance for, that degraded and demoralizing creed “which says that women is by dust, a soul- less toy for tyrant’s lust.” On the contrary, he usually treats his wife distinct respect, and regards her as an equal and a companion to an extent, which can hardly be said to be the rule among many of the Indian peoples. Kachari women, both in early life and as matron, enjoyed a large measure of freedom, which is very rarely abused for an evil purpose.”*⁴²

He goes on to say that “a Bodo husband generally with pride and pleasure introduces his wife to the visitors and in discharging this social duty he commonly uses a phrase “*be angni burwi*”, literally ‘This is my old women’, these words are not used jeeringly at all, but with much real respect and affection....”⁴³

FOOD HABIT

Rice is the stable food but this is supplemented by a plentiful supply of vegetable, sometimes procured from the neighbouring forests and it is seldom that they do not manage to procure some kinds of animal food, flesh or fish, of which latter, they are fond. When untainted by Hinduism, they were at liberty to eat almost every kind of flesh (e.g. pork) with the one exception of the domestic cow. The most highly priced article of diet is pig, and numbers of these animals may be seen in all

Bodo villages. The favourites beverage is a kind of rice-beer known as *madh* or *zou* prepared by steeping rice in water for two or three days. Another liquor, *photika* or *phitika* prepared from *madh* or *zou* by distillation, is of less innocent character. It is perfectly colourless and has a strong pungent taste, redolent of smoke, and something is common with very strong whisky. There is a myth about the creation of the *zou* or *jumai* (rice beer) among the Bodos. The rice-beer has a great importance in the Bodo society. Besides, it is use in the social functions it is offered to the BathouBwrai (the chief god) and other minor gods and goddess. The *jumaffi* or *zou* is prepared with a traditional system. Smoking is not rare among the Bodos. There is no restriction especially in the village. The elders and the younger smoke together. The elderly women also smoke. In remote villages, a sort of earthen or wooden *hangkha* is used. The *hangkha* has two parts; the lower part is separated when not in use. The top portion is called *silim* (an earthen small smoking vessel) which alone can be used either alone or along with the *hangkha*. The *phuski* is popular and constant companion. It is a pipe wide upper end for the tobacco and narrow end for the mouth. Dried tobacco leaf after being cut is cut into small bits and placed on the top receptacle is set fire to the smoke is inhaled from the narrow side. It is like the cigar used by the Europeans. Now, *beedis* and cigarettes have replaced traditional smoking gears and systems.

The Bodo are very fond of meat and fish. They dry the flesh of the deer or pork and preserve for a long period and use it as food when they are busy with their agricultural works. This sort of dried flesh and dried fish are called *bedor goran* and *na goran* respectively. They also dry small fishes in the sun light or on the fire, apply some quantity of steams of arum, then grind them together, store it in a bamboo tube (*owa hashung*) and cover the mouth of the tube with the leaves of the plantain (*thalir bilai*). This is called *napham* and it can be preserved for two to three years.

They are accustomed to wild vegetables from the forests, besides the ones they produce at home. The wild vegetables are of different tastes. Some vegetables are used as medicine also. It is probable that the villagers of remote places do not use any modern type of medicine as they use the wild vegetables as medicines when they suffer from any disease and get relieved. Every member of a Bodo family is fond of the *andla khari*, prepared with the dust of rice, chicken and the shoot of the bamboo (*owa mewai*) as well as of *narzee khari*, prepared with dry jute leaves, the pork or

with the chicken. As their neighbouring non-Bodo societies like caste Hindus, the Bodo Kacharis also are very fond of the locally prepared alkali potash which they call *Kharoi* which in Assamese is called *Khar*.⁴⁴ They have the custom of community hunting and fishing for food.

DRESS AND ORNAMENTS

The Bodo Kacharis are fond of certain colourful garments, and are acquainted with the art of dying, the materials for preparing the dyeing (usually blue and various shades of red) being supplied generally from the leaves or roots of trees.

The male persons both young and old put on *gamcha*, woven at home, which hangs down to the knees from the loin. During winter they wrap the body with a wrapper of cotton or Endi spun and woven at home. This wrapper is called *jwmgra* or *mwdwmni gamcha*. They also use a *banian*, a sort of coat of cotton or *endi*. Such dresses of the Bodo male persons are now rarely worn except by the villagers of the interior places. Modern dresses have replaced traditional ones in this age of globalisation and commercialisation.

The women formerly and even now tie a cloth round the chest just below the arm that hangs to the toe. It is called *dokhna*. If it is plain, it is called *salamatha* and if ornamented, it is called *dokna thawsi*. The latter type of *dokna* is essential during marriage ceremony which the bride (*hinjao godan*) and the two *boirathis* are to wear compulsory. The ornamented *dokhna* is hardly obtained now. In earlier days the Bodo women did not use any other body cover, except a scarf called *chadar* or *jumgra*. The Bodo women of state of Kamrup, Darrang and Nowgong district use *dokhna organ* also. The Bodo women of the West Bengal use Sari as their common garment equally with their Hindu neighbours.

The popular designs of the ornamented *dokhna* are many. Among them most common are *daothu godo* (design of the doves neck), *phareo megon* (designs of pigeon eye), *pahar agor* (designs of hills scenery), *moider agon* (design of elephants foot print) etc. Orange, yellow and sky colours are the favourite ones. The spinning is done with a spindle called *thaokri* and the *pitloom* is called *hi-chan-chali*. Bodo male

members of the contemporary society use the dresses which are generally worn by members of other societies.

Women use very few ornaments made of silver and gold. The following ornaments are common: For the ear: *khera or kheru, jabkhring* (ear-ring), *talinguri or dul, boula* (for the upper ear), *puti* (it is a small flower attached to the ear lobe). For the nose: *nak-pul* (it is a small and flowery, a type of knob struck to the nostril or the outer skin of the nose through a hole made earlier). *Bulaki* (Nose pendent). For the neck: *Chandra har* (it is a heavy necklace of five layer hung on the chest from the neck), *Bisahar* (a necklace), *Thanka-siri* (it is a necklace worn round the neck), *jibon-zin-siri* (it is a necklace with a silver oval unornamented piece for the back of the neck from which hangs on two side two snake-like chains biting into two sides of another plain silver oval plate resting at the junction of the chest and the abdomen). For the hands: *Mutha* (it is ornamented bangle about 2 ½ inch wide). It is worn by the Rajbansis of North Bengal, *Ashan Suri*, (a small bangle). In Bodo any bangle is called *Ashan*.

ECONOMIC

The main economy of the Bodos is agriculture. Agriculture is their main economic source. It is believe that the Bodos were the first agricultural nomads to have entered this part of the globe. They were the first to introduce irrigation system and to teach the autochthones groups of this region how to domicile themselves to plants. Their agricultural expertise had been profusely praised by the British official and the American Missionaries who worked among them during the early nineteenth century. Captain Butler describes them as the best cultivators. They irrigate their lands, to a great extent, from hill stream.⁴⁵ They cultivate different types of crops, vegetables, fruits and other foodstuffs. Amongst these, paddy cultivation is prime one and rice is the staple food. The granary and the cattle shed indicate the economic condition of the family. The Bodo cultivators ally together to dig canals, sometimes several miles in length from the hill stream through which they bring water to their fields. In fact the Bodo cultivators along the foot-hills of Darrang and Kamrup districts still do so in present days and they even pay some sort of water cess to the

Bhutan official in kind or cash for drawing irrigation water from the hilly streams flowing down from that country.

S. Endle writes: The people are especially skilful in the construction of irrigation canals and earth work embankments for diverting water from river beds into their fields. The Kacharis have a highly efficient and inexpensive public work department of their own.⁴⁶

Besides agriculture operation another related economic activity in which the Bodos had a natural prosperity was animal husbandry, particularly rearing of pigs and fowls.⁴⁷ They did not they take to it for commercial purpose. Today women are seen to be engaging in selling the animal products. The manure from the animals is used to increase the fertility of the soil. Cattle were used for ploughing, transport and food. In ancient times hunting was not only a favourites sport among the Bodos but it was also looked upon as a means to add to the family income.

Another economic activity in which the Bodos, mainly their womenfolk, involve in the rearing of silkworm on castor-seed plant leaves and drawing silk threads from the cocoons. This silk thread, known as '*endi*' (pronounced as eri with a hard 'r'), is then woven by them in their hand-loom to produce warm wrappers which have had always a very good market not only in Assam but also outside, like Tibet and China. Besides these *endi* products the Bodo women also weave various types of cotton cloths on their hand-loom both for their own use as well as for the market. It is however only recently that these hand-loom products of the Bodo women have caught the attention of outside markets and hence a new avenue of employment has opened up for them.⁴⁸ Among the other delicacies of the Bodos are fish, which is available in plenty and is almost a part of their daily dish. Besides its uses as food, it also serves as the means of economic gain.

Barter trade system facilitated the growth of trade in early times. The Bodos had also engaged in border trade activities during the ancient and the medieval periods. Having migrated from the Sino-Tibetan border regions through the numerous mountains passes the Bodo, settling in the northern foot-hill regions of Bengal and Assam, had for long maintained trade links with the bordering hill tribes on the north and through them the Tibetans and the Chinese traders.⁴⁹

The government of Assam constituted the Tribal Belts and Blocks to protect the tribal lands from alienation and encroachment by the non-tribal. But it could not provide “adequate protection to the tribal’s”. The economic hardship faced by the Bodos was one of the factors that led to the movement for a separate state or the ‘Bodoland Movement’.

Initially, the Bodos were not very keen on government jobs which were grabbed mostly by outsiders. But with the passage of time and the spread of education, Bodo youths are now exploring different avenues and are joining services in the government department, private and public sectors and also launching professional and business careers. Efforts are being made to translate household skills like weaving into opportunities for rural livelihood by developing markets outside the region for their products thus paving the way for self reliance. The present generation has realized that only agricultural and allied activities will not help the community prosper. Trade, commerce, industry, etc. are all pre-requisites for economic empowerment.

RELIGION

The traditional religion of the Bodos which is current among them since time immemorial, is invariably linked up with the worship of *Bathou Bwrai* or *Sibrai*, the supreme god of the Bodos, their religion is known as *Bathou* religion. They worship *Bathou Bwrai* and other gods and goddess during their religious function and festivities known as Kherai and Garza. But in every Bodo household one can see a *siju* plant (*euphorbia splendens*) on the *Bathou* altar. There is no place for idol worship in *Bathou* religion.⁵⁰

The Bodos came under the Vedic philosophy resulting in the emergence of Brahma Dharma. This united, integrated, awakened and aroused the Bodos through religious enlightenment, but their greater unity remains elusive.

Secondly, some Bodos came under the ‘Satsang principle’ of Sri Sri Thakur Anukul Chandra. They also follow Krishna consciousness, converted to Anukul dharma by detachments from their own cultural, languages and literature. Conversion

processes reach their zenith when the followers completely forgot what they had of their own.

In the mean time, the Christian missionaries converted some Bodos into Christianity and some Bodos become Sarania by adopting Ek Sara Nam Charan of Srimanta Sankardeva and abandoned their original culture and language. In the villages like Panbari Alamganj of the present Dhubri district many Bodos converted into Islam and lost their identity.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In the following paragraphs a review of some of the literature which has been consulted to arrive at the fundamental of the research question and its understandings is outlined briefly:

C.B. Firth⁵¹ in his book, *An Introduction to Indian Church History* speaks about establishment of the christian Church in North East India and its impact on society.

Journey towards Enlightenment: Gurudev and the Society, by Bidyasagar Narzary & Malabika Mitra,⁵² is a biography of Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma, a great social reformer and the foremost preacher of the Brahma religion among the Bodos. They have also compiled and edited the book, *Boroni Pandulipi: Social Laws of the Bodos: Codified for the followers of Brahma religion in 1934*,⁵³ which contains the social laws codified by Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma in 1934 for the followers of Brahma religion from the Bodo community.

Dr. Manjula Hussain⁵⁴ in her book entitled: *The Assamese Christian*, speaks about the spread of christianity in North East India and in Assam, historical background of the Assamese christians and their current pattern of living. It describes some aspects of social life of the Assamese christians and examines the historical forces and circumstances of the spread of christianity. The book also describes the ways in which indigenous cultural elements have been blended with the norms, values, beliefs and customs of these christians.

The work of the Baptist Missionaries in the North Bank of Assam, authored by Chowaram Daimari⁵⁵ is a book on the 'Baptist Missionaries'. It covers 1893-1967 and speaks of length on the missionary activities of American, Swedish origin American and Australian who worked in Assam and especially in North Bank region of Assam. It has also examined the link of Baptist Missionaries after discontinued by the Serampore mission in North East. He also brings to light on the works of American Baptist Foreign Mission society till 1945 and works of Baptist General Conference and Australian Baptist Mission Society till the year 1967. He also analyzed the impact of christianity after the arrival of missionaries.

D.N. Cheney and J.V. Webster's book,⁵⁶ *Not by Chance : The story of the Australian Baptist Missionary Society in Assam and the Boros, Garos and Rabha Churches*, is work which delves at length on the service provided by the Australian Baptist Missionary Society in Assam among the Bodos, Garos and Rabhas. It reveals their work on establishment of educational institution, medical institution, Bible translation and Bible training institution, evangelist activities, work on women empowerment as well as other humanitarian services.

Rev. Dr. D. Arthur Jeyakumar⁵⁷ in his book, *History of Christianity in India Selected Themes*, deals with the story of the origin of christianity in India and contribution on education, medical mission, upliftment of women, children and outcaste people of India as well as on christians and the national movement.

Fr. Stephen Pampackal⁵⁸ in his book, *A Short History of Catholic Church in India*, is a worked on the period between the arrival of the Apostle Thomas and missionaries to the establishment of vicariates in India by the sacred Congregation for evangelization which goes on up to our times. Regarding the North Eastern Zone of India, the author has described on the beginning of the church in Assam, regarding the Assam Apostolic Prefecture as well as the great apostolate of the Silesians of Don Bosco in Assam.

Olav Hodne's⁵⁹ book, *The seed that bore fruit* work is a short History of the Santal Mission of the Northern Churches 1867-1967. He has mentioned about the Bodo converts into N.E.L.C. mission society.

Impact of Christianity on North East India, edited by J. Puthenpurakal⁶⁰ has highlights the establishment of christianity and foundation of some of the denomination such as American Baptist Mission, Australian Baptist Mission, Lutheran Mission, the Church of England (C.N.I) and the Catholic Church. The author has also mentioned their contribution on literature as well as socio-cultural change of the Bodos after the coming of christianity.

Social Mobility: From Tribalism to Indianism: The Bodos: The Aboriginal People of Eastern India, written by Dr. Binoy Kumar Brahma⁶¹ discusses on the establishment of the christianity in Assam among the Bodos. Denomination such as Baptist Mission, Anglican Mission, Lutheran Mission, the Scottish Presbyterian Church and Catholic Mission were presented in his work. He has also mentioned a reason for slow development of christianity among the Bodos.

The Mighty Works of God, by Fredrick S. Down⁶² has put out the events from 1836 to 1950 and gives a vivid picture of how christian mission took its roots beginning from the plain of Assam and branched out to the hills of Meghalaya, Nagaland and Manipur the establishment of mission centres with schools, hospitals along with evangelism and the formation of Council of Baptist Churches in North East India.

Frederick S Down⁶³ in his writings, *History of Christianity in India*, has placed strong emphasis on social history. He is concerned with the impact of christianity upon the peoples of North East India, particularly the tribal peoples inhabiting the hill areas where the main concentrations of christians are to be found. Growth of churches among the Kachari people of plain areas such as the church of American Baptist Missionaries, Church of Anglicans and Lutherans as well as the Roman Catholic Church have been placed in his work. He has specially emphasis on the relationship between christianity and social change. He also seeks to demonstrate the unique interaction between socio-cultural plurality and the ecclesiastical and political context.

Five Bareley Loaves: Australian Baptists in Global Mission 1864-2010, edited by Tony Cupit, Ros Gooden and Ken Manley,⁶⁴ is a remarkable story of generations of local Australian churches who served for the global people. It highlights the sum of many and varied contributions. The author had mentioned about the contribution of the Australian Baptist Foreign Mission Society for the Bodos.

Fr. Selvaraj Ignatius⁶⁵ in his book, *History of the Catholic Church in the Diocese of Bongaigaon* has discusses the contribution of the Catholic Church towards education, health care, and developmental activities that played a vital role in the service of the society in lower Assam.

Assam in the days of Company (1826-1858), authored by H.K Barpujari⁶⁶ has mention in his book on the establishment of American Baptist Missionary and its contribution for the people of Assam.

Victor Hugo Sword⁶⁷ in his book, *Baptists in Assam: A Century of Missionary Service 1836-1936* briefly shows the spread of christianity in Assam with the introduction of William Carey and American Baptist Mission, who stressed on the promotion of education for girls and boys and more so on the education for the Kacharis by the christian missionaries.

The Flute and the Harp: Essay on Bodo Literature and Culture authored by Dr. Anil Boro⁶⁸ is an attempt to analyze the book on the history of the Bodos who constitute one of the major ethnic groups of Assam and eastern India-autochthones who has been struggling relentlessly to assert their linguistic, literary and cultural aspiration, since the first decade of the twentieth century. He also speaks of the christian missionaries among the Bodo people, who had tried to establish a friendly relation in favour of the Bodos.

The Encyclopedia Bodos edited by Dr. Subuncha Mwshahary⁶⁹ is an encyclopaedia on the Bodo people covering aspects of language, literature and society.

Milton. S. Sangma⁷⁰ in his book, *History of American Baptist Mission in North East India*, Vol. I, has narrated on the origin of the Baptist Church in Europe, its spread to different parts of the world, its developments in USA, and coming, establishment and expansion of the American Baptist Church in different parts of North East India till 1950 when the whole management of the church was handed over to the local christians.

Milton S. Sangma⁷¹ in his study, *A History of American Baptist Mission in North-East India, Vol-II* deals with the unconditional services of American Baptist Mission in North East India.

Aphuno Chase-Roy⁷² in his book, *American Baptist Women Missionaries in Northeast India (1836-1950)*, attempts to help shed light on the dedicated missionary work of a group of American Baptist women missionary who arrived in North East India during the period of 1836-1950.

Bakul Chandra Basumatary⁷³ in his study, *A concise history of the Bodos*, deals with the history of the Bodo community.

Sucheta Sen Chaudhuri⁷⁴ in her book, *The Bodo Movement and Women's participation* argue on the participation of women in social movement. It further concentrates on the process of organizing women within the Bodo movement.

Religion and Dances of the Bodos, authored by Dr. Liladhar Brahma⁷⁵ described on authentic culture of the Bodos.

Bidyasagar Narzary⁷⁶ in his book, *Forgotten Heros: Bodo Freedom Fighter*, mentioned about the contributors of the Bodos during the freedom struggle along with the names of those persons who participated in the freedom struggle.

The Bodos: Emergence and Assertion of an Ethnic Minority written by the Sujit Choudhury⁷⁷ has narrates the different phase of history through which the Bodo emerged as the Bodos dominant ethnic minority of Assam.

Mattew Muttumana⁷⁸ in his book, *Christianity in Assam and inter-faith dialogue: A study on the Modern Religious Movement in North East India*, observes the modern religious movement in North East India. He also forth the details on them, which he has told in various forms many times, from the perspective of christian missionary.

Khema Sonowal⁷⁹ in his book, *Why Bodo Movement?*, examined the causes for demanding such facilities and political share in the light of the Bodo ethnic movement for self determination.

An Introduction to the Boro Language, authored by Phukan Basumatary,⁸⁰ is a structural analysis of the Bodo language. The analysis is done based on different linguistic level. viz. phonology, morphology and vocabulary. In this book emphasis is given on a synchronic analysis.

Premlata Devi's⁸¹ book on, *Social and religious institution of Bodos*, explains the traditional socio-religious institutions of the Bodos from philosophical point of view. Man, society, ethics and gods as believed by the Bodos have been discussed in detail.

Susanta Narzary's,⁸² *Contribution of Christian Missionaries in the development of education among the Boros with particular reference to undivided Kokrajhar District of Assam*, is a brief outline of the history of different missionaries and their contribution in the field of education among the Bodos inhabiting the undivided Kokrajhar district. In this brief narrative, he focuses on the contribution of christian missionaries of different denominations among the Bodos within the areas.

Mr. Banjaigiri Mashahary's,⁸³ *The Role of the All Bodo Students union in Bodo Agitation for a separate State*, studies the deep rooted issues of the turbulent agitation of the All Bodo Students' Union of Assam spearheaded by different groups of the society at different period of time.

Dulen Basumatary's⁸⁴ findings on entitled: *Genesis of Bodoland Movement in Assam 1960-2003*, observes the deep-rooted causes of the turbulent movement of the Bodo masses spearheaded by different groups of the society at different period of time.

Phanindra Baro's⁸⁵ study on *Bodo Sahitya Sabha: A brief Historical Survey* portrays the historical development of Bodo Sahitya Sabha.

Paresh Chandra Narzary's⁸⁶ study on, *An Assessment of the impact of Christianity on the Boro people of the Kokrajhar District*, tries to analyze Bodo christians struggling to express their faith and to make it a new conversant in their life style in the midst of the tribal identity crisis and at the same time to cope with the new race of socio-cultural and socio-economic modernization.

Herambo Narzary's⁸⁷ study on, *The origin and growth of Christianity in Assam with special reference to Church of North India in Kokrajhar District*, attempt to portray a clear picture of growth and activities of Churches with special reference to the Church of North India in Kokrajhar District in Assam.

Bongkim Basumatary's⁸⁸ research work on, *A Christian Response to the Bodo Movement in Assam: A critique* projects on the Bodos who had suffered cultural prejudices, political, economic and educational setbacks and other drawbacks, further leading to social, emotional, psychological, physical and mental issues. He has tried to examine if christians and the church have adequately responded to the movement. It is an attempt to show the role of the christian, and the church to partner with the secular agencies, without resorting to violence, in promoting life in its fullness for the Bodo people.

Jwngma Basumatary's⁸⁹ study on, *Socio-Economic & Religious Changes among the Contemporary Bodos through Conversion to the Christianity with special reference to the Lutheran Church in Assam*, observes the changes among the Bodos, particularly in the area of religious, social and economic spare after becoming christians. He has made an attempt to analyze the influence of the gospel on the Bodos and gives suggestions for the development.

Gilbert Borgoary's⁹⁰ *A Missiological Assessment of the Lutheran Mission Among the Bodos with Reference to Bongaigaon Diocese Assam*, investigates and make a missiological assessment of the growth of the Lutheran missionary activities and the impact of Christianity on the Bodo society with a view to draw lessons for future mission activities among the Bodo people and others as well.

Ipendra Borgoary's⁹¹ work, *The Impact of Christianity on the Bodo society with special reference to Gaurang, Tukrajhar and Bengtol Mission Stations of present Kokrajhar District of Assam*, deals with the historical background of the Bodos with their social-economic condition, language, religion and laws and customs to determine the nature of their identity and social change, advent of christianity and their activities in the Bodos society beginning from the closing decades of the nineteenth century examines the impact of christianity on the Bodo society.

A study of Christian Mission of the Goalpara Boro Baptist Church Union of Lower Assam from 1927 to 1999, by Arjun Basumatary⁹² mentions about the service rendered by the Goalpara Baptist Church Union of Lower Assam.

In his research work, *Bodo Christians, the Bodoland Movement and Nation Building: A Missiological interpretation*,⁹³ he has also mentions the participation of

Bodo Christians and its impact of their participation in the Bodoland Movement and Nation building efforts.

Ratul Basumatary⁹⁴ in his work, *Gospel and Bodos: An Ethnographic Study* introduces about the origin of the Bodos, their features, geographical distribution and population. He explores the domestic and cultural environment, family institution and its importance, on Bodo religion and thus finally studies on the churches among the Bodos, particularly of the Goalpara Boro Baptist Church Union.

Ipendra Borgoaary's article "Christian contributions to Boro Society", in Prodeep Kr. Daimary,⁹⁵ edited journal *Bisombi*, discusses on Christian missionaries contribution in the development of Bodo language, literature, education, medical facilities, abolition of intoxication and emergence of a new sense of nationalism on the Bodos.

Khiren Borgoaary's article in '*Souvenir, Youth Golden Jubilee celebration 27th-30th December, 2005*' edited by Kohen Islary⁹⁶, 'A Brief Account of the Bodos and the Advent of Christianity among the Bodos in North East India', delves at length on the origin and early history of the Bodos, their social, cultural and economic life. He also narrates on the advent of Christianity among the Bodos in North East India.

Prodeep Kumar Daimary's article, 'Rev. Sdney Endle: His love for the Boros', in Amal Kr. Moshahary,⁹⁷ journal *Commemoration of Rev. Sydney Endle*, speaks about contributions of the Rev. Sdney Endle for the Bodo people.

Rtd. Rev. Nityananda Borgoaary, 'Northern Evangelical Lutheran Church', which appears in Sailen Iswary's⁹⁸ edited *Dempo*, bring light the foundation of the N.E.L.C among the Bodos.

Rev. Pranay Daimari's article, 'Boro Baptist Convention (1914-2014)', which appears in Hemol Basumatary,⁹⁹ edited the *Canaan* speaks about Christianity and glimpses of the Boro Baptist Convention and its history.

Fr. Thomas Pulloppillil's, article, 'Impact of Catholic church on Bodo society', which appears on Shickna John Wary,¹⁰⁰ *Khousethini Garang*, delves on about the history of the Catholic Church among the Bodos. Here he examines the impact specifically of Catholicism among the Bodos under the heading of Culture,

Religion, Society and Literature in addition to he also examine the impact on other Churches.

Thus, with the review of literatures of the renowned scholars it has come to know the spread of the activities of the christian missionaries, and their contributions in the development of the Bodo society. However, there are still areas which have not been covered and hence this proposed work on the topic entitled- Christian Mission and its' impact on the Bodo society (1865-1999) has become important.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the present study are:

1. To study the spread of cristianity among the Bodos.
2. To delve the role of the christian missionaries in the uplift of the Bodo Society.
3. To study the Bodo christians and their activities in Bodo society.
4. To investigate whether any changes has taken place among the Bodo christians after accepting christianity.
5. To evaluate the Bodo christians in the nation building.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology of the proposed work is an interdisciplinary in approach based on primary and secondary sources. A primary source includes visits to museum, libraries, church archives and consulting the record files minutes, annual report sources. Personal interview with the Church leaders and elderly christian, questionnaire methods and visits to christian mission centre while secondary sources were on consulting all available published and unpublished works on the Bodos, monographs, journals, magazine, proceedings, seminar paper, articles, souvenirs, thesis & other relevant reference works.

CHAPTERIZATION

The thesis is divided into five chapters.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The first chapter deals with Bodo people and discusses about their status viz. socio-economic, political, language, laws and customs determining their character and identity.

CHAPTER 2: ADVENT OF CHRISTIAN MISSIONARIES IN ASSAM

The second chapter speaks of the advent of missionaries in the North East India, Assam and among the Bodos. Different denomination such as Baptist Mission, Anglican Church, Scottish Presbyterian Church, Northern Evangelical Lutheran Church and Catholic Church came among the Bodos. Different denominations evangelized in different areas and converted them to christianity. Today more than 9% of the Bodo population practice christianity.

CHAPTER 3: CONTRIBUTION OF CHRISTIAN MISSIONARIES IN ASSAM

The third chapter discusses the contribution of the christian missionaries among the Bodos in different areas such as education, literature, health and hygiene, economy, humanitarian services etc. Socially several vices existing in the Bodo societies were abolished. Literary works of different nature emerged enriching the Bodo literature. The health and hygiene of the Bodos which were in a very deplorable state improved with the advance medical treatment. Economy of the Bodos also improved with the application of the modern technology in agricultural and other enterprises.

CHAPTER 4: THE IMPACT OF CHRISTIANITY ON THE BODO SOCIETY

The fourth chapter examines the impact of the activities of the christian missionaries. The impact was felt in every aspects of Bodo society. Socially, religiously, culturally and economically Bodo society was affected.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

The fifth chapter which is the concluding chapter sums up the entire study by highlighting the entire course of ways and means by which Bodo society can advance while co-existing in a peacefully inspite of the differences in belief systems.

ENDNOTES

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- ³ <https://www.census2011.co.in/religion.php> accesses on 08/11/2020
- ⁴ <https://www.census2011.co.in/data/religion/3-christianity.html> accessed on 08/11/2020
- ⁵ Martin Borgoiary, “The Contributions of Fr. Joseph Zubizarreta and the Christian Missionaries”, Issac Narzary (ed.), in *Souvenir, Golden Jubilee celebration, 1966-2016*, p.72.
- ⁶ S. Barkati, *Tribes of Assam*, National Book Trust, Delhi, 1969, p.1.
- ⁷ Rev. Sidney Endle, *The Kacharis*, Bina library, College Hostel Road, Panbazar Guwahati, Assam, 2012(2nd ed.), p.1
- ⁸ *Ibid.* p.1.
- ⁹ Sir Edward Gait, *A history of Assam*, Lawyer’s Book Stall, Guwahati, India, 1997, p. 236.
- ¹⁰ Dutta Debabrata, *History of Assam*, Sribhumi Publishing Company, Calcutta, 2010 (Reprint), p. 153.
- ¹¹ Ajoy Roy, *The Boro Imbrogilo*, Spectrum Publications, Guwahati, 1995, p.8.
- ¹² Sir Edward Gait, *Op. Cit.* p.25.
- ¹³ *Ibid.* p. 26.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.* p. 21.
- ¹⁵ Arjun Basumatary, *Bodo Christian, The Bodoland Movement and Nation Building: A Missiology Interpretation*, unpublished Ph. D thesis in missiology submitted to Centre for Contemporary Christianity, Bangalore (India), 2014. p.64.
- ¹⁶ Arjun Basumatary, *Ibid.* p.90.
- ¹⁷ Khema Sonowal, *Why Bodo Movement?*, EBH Publishers (India), Guwahati, 2013, p. 86.
- ¹⁸ Dr. Harka Bahadur Chetri Atreya, *The Bodos of Assam: a socio-cultural study*, M.K.Bagchi, Kolkata, 2007, p. 208.

- ¹⁹ G.A Grierson, *Linguistic Survey of India, Vol.III: Tibeto- Burman Family*, Low price publications, Delhi, 2005 (Reprint), p. 1.
- ²⁰ Gilbert Borgoary, *A Missiological Assessment of the Lutheran Mission Among the Bodos with Reference to Bongaigaon Diocese Assam*, unpublished M. Th thesis submitted to the Senate of North India Institute of Post- Graduate Theological Studies, Serampore and Bishop's College, 2000, p.6.
- ²¹Dr. Harka Bahadur Chhetri Atreya, *Op. Cit.* p.113
- ²² Anil Kumar Boro, *A Brief History of Bodo Literature*, SahityaAcademi, 2012 (2nd ed.), p.11.
- ²³ Rev. Sidney Endle, *Op. Cit.* p.71.
- ²⁴Dr. Harka Bahadur Chhetri Atreya, *Op. Cit.* p.113.
- ²⁵ Ajay Roy, *The Boro Imbrogilo*, Spectrum Publications, Guwahati, 1995, p.15.
- ²⁶Dr. Anil Boro, *The Flute and the Harp (Eassy on Literature and Culture)*, G.B.D Publisher, Kolkata/Guwahati, 2004, p.8
- ²⁷Per Article 344 (1) and 351 of the Indian Constitution, the eight schedule includes the recognition of the following 22 languages, Assamese, Bengali, BodoDogri, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Kashmiri, Konkani, Maithili, Malayalam, Meitei (Manipur), Marathi, Nepali, Odia, Punjabi, Samakriti, Santali, Sindhi, Tamil, Telegu, Urdu.
- ²⁸Satyandra Nath Mondal, *History and Culture of the Bodos*, cited by Bonny Narzary, Jalpaiguri, West Bengal, India, 2011, pp.91-92.
- ²⁹ Anil Kumar Boro, *A history of Bodo literature*, Sahitya Academi, New Delhi, 2012, p. 7.
- ³⁰P.C Bhattacharjya, *A Descriptive Analysis of the Bodo Language*, p.16 quoted in Anil Kumar Boro, *A history of Bodo literature*, Sahitya Academi, New Delhi, 2012, p. 7.
- ³¹Rev. Sydney Endle, *Op. Cit.* p.22.
- ³²Anil Kumar Boro, *Op. Cit.* p. 7.
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