

## CHAPTER 3

### CONTRIBUTION OF CHRISTIAN MISSIONARIES AMONG THE BODOS

The christian missionaries and their work among the Bodos played a great role in the progress of the society. The socio-economic, political and religious conditions of the Bodos were more or less stagnant without any hope for change. The missionaries witnessed the state of affairs. They perceived the Bodos as the heathen people whom they thought should be civilized. They were not far from the colonial concept of “white man’s burden” to bring superior western civilized world to the pagans. Sydney Endle describes the Bodo religion as ‘animistic’ and its underlying principal being characteristically one of fear or dread. Therefore together with evangelization, it was their concern to uplift the Bodo society. They adopted different methods in their mission to reach out to the Bodos such as socio-economic development programme, medical assistance, education etc. This resulted not only in conversion but also in bringing changes in the Bodo society. In this connection Rev. G. R. Kampfer wrote in his notes. *“We are visiting our Christian churches in the land of the Kacharis, formerly spirit worshippers sunk in the depravity of ignorance and superstition. Long ago the ruling [sic] race of the province, they were driven back into the swamps and jungles by the more sober and intelligent Assamese Hindus. And now the mission is following them up. Hinduism offers no hope of raising them from their fallen state. Before Mohamedanism they remained adamant. It is in Christianity that they believe to find the power that can restore them to full liberty of the spirit and their true worth. They are in need of counsel and encouragement, and we are sharing their hopes and their endeavours.”*<sup>1</sup>

O.L. Snaitag delineates that christianity insisted not only in a change in belief i.e. belief in God as revealed in Christ but also in the change by the adoption of a new lifestyle.<sup>2</sup> The areas where the contributions of the missionaries have been prominently seen are discussed below.

## EDUCATION

Contribution of the christian missionaries in the field of education will ever remain a subject to be reckoned with for transformation of Bodo society. The missionaries toiled faithfully to uplift the society through while evangelizing among them. Imparting education was one way to attract the people towards them to teach and preach. It was also their intention to make their converts educated who in turn would be a developing force in the society. Therefore various denominations came among the Bodos and opened their mission centres not only in the vicinity of the urban area but also in the interior and remote places where hardly any proper communication system existed. They reclaimed the jungles and built ordinary houses and started their mission work. The contribution of the missionaries in the field of education is discussed in the order of denominations.

Among the christian missionaries the Baptist were the first to step into Assam and they have the credit of pioneering the modern education in Assam. They took the first initiative to open schools in Assam. It was in the boarding school of the American Baptist Mission at Gauhati, Aphinta Kachari from Jhargaon village of North Kamrup was educated and later baptized as the first Bodo Christian. Hereafter at different places schools began to be opened. Rev. A. E Stephenson incharge of Goalpara Mission opened a school and a hostel at Goalpara town in 1897.<sup>3</sup> After about two decades, another school was established at Bamungaon in 1917 by Rev. A.C Bower the incharge of the American Baptist Mission of Goalpara district. Mr. Hilary Basumatary and Baliram Basumatary were as the first teachers in that school.<sup>4</sup> Later Asharu Basumatary, Bodon Ch. Narzary, Jogeswar Hazowary and Jormursing Narzary joined the school.<sup>5</sup> Besides teaching they also lent their time in missionary works. In 1930, Mr. Uman K. Marak a local Garo missionary opened a mission station at Tukrajhar where a lower primary school was also started.<sup>6</sup> Mr. Jogeswar Hazowary and Dhonsing Narzary were the other teachers in the school.<sup>7</sup> It was during this time one Minaram Basumatary, was converted and in 1933 the Gauhati Baptist Mission involved him to look after the mission work among the Bodos. He also started a boarding school for boys and girls within the mission compound. By 1936 number of primary schools rose to 11 with 66 girls and 113 boys.<sup>8</sup> By this time the primary school at Tukrajhar was raised to M.E level. The initiatives taken by the local

christians were notable. They constructed five class rooms and a dormitory for girls.<sup>9</sup> It was inaugurated on 23<sup>rd</sup> October 1937.<sup>10</sup> Minaram Basumatary was given the charge as the headmaster and his wife Minnie was appointed as an assistant teacher. The new M.E. school started with four teachers and 58 students out of which 43 were boys and the rest 15 girls.<sup>11</sup> The hard labour put in by Minaram and his wife was reflected in the progress of the school and fulfilment of the aspirations of the people. By 1938 the school had the enrolment of 93 students.<sup>12</sup>

In 1938, Miss Marion Burnham a missionary was given the responsibility of looking after the Goalpara district Baptist Mission for a year in place of Rev. V.H. Sword who was on leave.<sup>13</sup> She ventured to open a new boarding school at Gauhati for Bodo students who came to pursue higher studies. Her intention was to facilitate the Bodo students who could not afford to go to Jorhat for studies. She asserted to spend more share of foreign fund for the Bodos even at the face of opposition to it by fellow missionaries.<sup>14</sup> She desired to help the Bodos by taking up such a step in the field of education.

By this time, Tukrajhar became a centre for the Baptist mission field<sup>15</sup> but the school did not progress as expected because the number of students in the M.E school came down to 35 and by 1945 there were only 2 students in class VI.<sup>16</sup> However, the missionaries did not give up. In 1947, Rev. Wilf and Gwenyth Crofts joined Tukrajhar Mission Centre and laid the foundation of another new school with a hostel facility. Mrs. Croft even gathered the women and taught them how to read and write. In 1950, a Bodo girl Miss Debisree Mochahary who was pursuing her studies in Gauhati boarding school was brought to Tukrajhar mission school by Rev. Wilf Croft and appointed as a school teacher.<sup>17</sup> She was also given an additional responsibility of looking after the girls' hostel. There were also other teachers namely Miss Jean Harry and Miss Fle Horwood who supported Miss Debisree Mochahary to manage the school.<sup>18</sup> They together with Mrs. Crofts used to encourage the parents to send their daughters to boarding school. With this, the missionaries were able to change the illiteracy status of the women. Rev. Wilf Crofts decided to improve the poor condition of the school. In this endeavour neither the housing problems nor the inconvenient situation could stop the pioneer missionaries from executing their plan. Rev. Wilf used to trek through the jungle on foot, by bicycle and bullock cart making contacts, preaching and teaching. The couple toured widely and concentrated on revitalizing the

school and churches. The adult illiterate women were also encouraged to go to school. They even opened night school for them.

In May 1951 there were re-shuffle of the missionaries. Rev. Wilf and Mrs. Gwenyth Crofts and Miss Jean Harry left for Baghmara in Garo Hills to begin works among the Garos. However Fle Horwood confirmed to stay at Tukrajhar as a school teacher.<sup>19</sup> In the same year Rev. Peter N. Wing joined Miss Fle Horwood and introduced night class for the adult illiterates.<sup>20</sup> Further, two or more new hostels for boys and girls were established at Barpathar. But they had to be closed down due to the lack of interest shown by the higher church authority.<sup>21</sup> But Rev. Peter N. Ewing put his whole effort to upgrade the M.E school to H.E school. He constructed a school building. In the month of February 1962, the honourable minister of Assam Shri Rupnath Brahma dedicated the new school building for the purpose of educating the Bodos. The building began to be used for night classes and Sunday school classes as well.

In 1984, another English Medium School was established with a motto 'Light the Light'. They named the school as J.D. Williams English School after the secretary of ABMS. The school imparted quality education in the Bodo heartland to the Bodo children in western Assam.<sup>22</sup>

In middle Assam of Darrang district a pioneering work in education was started by Rev. George Richard Kampfer. He developed a vision to educate the Bodos besides preaching among them. He took the responsibility of Borigaon L.P School in 1914 which was established by Rev. Sydney Endle at Doamokha.<sup>23</sup> Sapan Daimary Secretary of Borigaon Baptist Church informed that as per record the school was established by Rev. Sydney Endle at Bengbari and later shifted to Doamokha. Rev. George Richard Kampfer shifted it to Borigaon.<sup>24</sup> Rothai Daimary, an evangelist was appointed as teacher of the school. In 1916 in the annual conference of the Mangaldai Baptist Christian Association held at Ambagaon a resolution was passed to take over more primary schools from the S.P.G.<sup>25</sup> By 1917, four primary schools were under the banner of the Mangaldai Baptist Christian Association.<sup>26</sup> Rev. George Richard Kampfer also started a night school for the adults in 1919.<sup>27</sup> In 1920, with the financial assistance from the Mangaldai Baptist Christian Association, Rev. George Richard Kampfer bought about fifty bighas of forest land at Borigaon for the propose

of school.<sup>28</sup> In 1925, the Mangaldai Baptist Christian Association opened a middle school at Borigaon.<sup>29</sup> Minaram Basumatary, a christian from Kothiatoli, Nagaon was appointed as the first headmaster of the school.<sup>30</sup> The school was supported by the contribution of the local Christians. Women had a great role in this mission as they contributed daily in the form of *muthi sawl* (a handful of rice) for the purpose.<sup>31</sup> However, in the report of the American Baptist Mission based on Assam's Mangaldai and North Kamrup fields by O.L Swanson, it has been mentioned that the schools were attended fairly and the teachers were paid from the mission fund while other numbers of schools were supported by the local board. By 1927, the number of schools increased to 30. Of these 20 schools were supported with the products of the cultivation of two or three puras of land; 5 by the local board, 3 by the mission and 2 by the church. Of the 2 schools supported by the church, one was a girls' school. The enrolment in the M.E school in 1927 was 70 with 7 teachers including 2 female teachers. In the girls' school there were 38 girl students.<sup>32</sup>

In 1931 with a view of reaching out to more villages, M.E school was shifted from Borigaon to Harisinga. A boys' hostel was also established.<sup>33</sup> Solomon Deuri a Bengali Christian from Borishal district of present Bangladesh was appointed as the headmaster of the school.<sup>34</sup> In 1932, Modaram Brahma succeeded him who was followed by Rabiram Kachari in 1934.<sup>35</sup> In the years that followed problems of varied nature cropped up; the most prominent being the funding of the school. Victor Hugo Sword, the incharge of the Mangaldai Mission Field expressed his concern in 1936 and said "one of the things we had to tackle soon after taking over the field (Mangaldai) a year ago was the Harisinga Middle English School. We found this institution in a few grass huts that were ready to fall down. The walls have been knocked down so that the cattle and goats used these houses more than the children and the thatch of the roof had rotted away".<sup>36</sup>

Another problem that the school had to face was the site of the school which was on the elephant corridor. V.H. Sword decided to shift the school from the northern side of the railway line to the southern side. Land was a problem again. In this situation, the Nepali community inhabiting the area came to their aid. In 1935, they donated a plot of land. With the active support from the local Christians and being funded by the Mangaldai Baptist Association, a school building with iron roof was raised. A hostel for boys also came up. Progress began to take place and in 1933

as per report of the Assam Baptist Mission Conference 35<sup>th</sup> session, Sadiya, Assam, on 8<sup>th</sup> December 1933 it has been mentioned that the “Harisinga M.E school has taken most of the attention of the people. The scholastic board of the school has been raised considerably and it is now a pleasure to visit the school.”<sup>37</sup>

In 1939, the Harisinga M.E School was recognized by the government.<sup>38</sup> In 1941, there were 29 village schools in the Christian villages out of which 23 were supported by the village churches.<sup>39</sup> Harisinga School was the only educational centre for miles around.

In 1941, Harisinga M.E School was to be upgraded to the secondary level but the lack of qualified teachers and drops in enrolments, refrained the management from executing the plan. In 1945, the American Baptist Mission handed over the Mangaldai Mission Field to the Baptist General Conference, U.S.A to enable them to take up the cause of the spread of secular education and medical facilities to the people of the area. By 1946, there were about 130 students in the Harisinga M.E School. For women education a girls’ hostel was constructed, where in 14 girl students could be accommodated. In 1948 another attempt was made to upgrade the Harisinga M.E School to a High School.<sup>40</sup> Naba Das from Gauhati who was the headmaster made all efforts to make Harisinga M.E Schools into a centre of learning in the region. Accordingly, students from neighbouring areas and states such as Tukrajhar, Nagaland, Mizoram, Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh came to study at Harisinga.<sup>41</sup>

In 1956, Harisinga High School was affiliated to Gauhati University and in 1977 it was provincialised and the government of Assam took over the school from the Darrang Baptist Christian Association. In 1984, it was further upgraded to a Higher Secondary School by introducing science stream in the pre-university level. It was the only science stream in the pre-university level for the entire northern Darrang area.

In 1995, Daimond English School was opened at Udalguri with a motto “Fear of the lord is the beginning of Knowledge” (Prov.1:7). A few years later a branch of it was established at Harisinga. These schools are highly committed to imparting education as well as playing a model role in the character formation and development of spiritual values of the children of the area.<sup>42</sup>

The Anglican Church was the first foreign mission which initiated a separate “Kachari Mission” for the Bodos. In 1840 Captain James T. Gordon was posted as the chief magistrate at Tezpur and visited the Bodo areas and came to know their simple life style and the need to educate them. It has been said that he approached Mr. Solomon Peck the corresponding secretary of the Baptist Mission, Boston on 1<sup>st</sup> September 1841 to establish schools.<sup>43</sup> But he found that the American Baptist Mission was less interested. But in 1854, Captain Francis Jenkins as Chief Commissioner of Assam took initiative to establish schools in the Bodo areas. A liberal grant for the spread of education among the Bodos was also arranged. The government sanctioned rupees 50 per month for the purpose.<sup>44</sup> In 1854 accordingly 3 schools were opened in Darrang district in the Bodo and Miri dominated areas.<sup>45</sup> The post Captain Gordon period was hard hit financially. So, in 1862, the Church Mission Society in Tezpur had to be handed over to the “Society for the Propagation of Gospel” (S.P.G) Mission. The S.P.G Mission fully dedicated itself for the Bodos and in 1864 Rev. Hesselmeyer was made the first in charge of the “Kachari Mission”.

The S.P.G Mission under Rev. Hesselmeyer opened 12 schools in Darrang district in 1864. Through these schools 277 boys received elementary education under the supervision of Rev. Hesselmeyer.<sup>46</sup> In the same year i.e. 1864 Sydney Endle was sent by the S.P.G Mission authority as assistant to Rev. Hesselmeyer.<sup>47</sup> He was to look after the affairs of the Kachari Mission. Rev. Sydney Endle ventured to open more schools in the Bodo areas and entrusted the new converts for its management. One such school was established at Bengbari in 1865 while opening the first church among the Bodos. Bhoot Rabha (later known as Bhoot Pandit as he studied in Sanskrit tolls) after his conversion to christianity in 1864, assumed a new name Simon Bhoot and settled at Dumbrugaon (Dowamokha part of Borigaon). Some students who were taught by Simon Bhoot (Bhoot Pandit) were Charles Kamel Mushahari of Mandalmakha (Sengkhari Mauza) and Sere Louis Bhobora of Dumbrugaon. Simon Saikia of Senglimari (near Tezpur) who was brought by Rev. Sydney Endle was appointed as the Headmaster of the school. Sere Loius Bhobora also served as a teacher in the Bengbari mission school. In 1893, another school was established at Dumbrugaon (Dowamokha). Two teachers were transferred from Bengbari mission school to Borigaon and one of them was Sisuram Saikia who later settled there

permanently. As per records by March 1869 there were 15 schools established during the tenure of Rev. Sydney Endle.

The few schools established by the S.P.G. Mission are Tezpur Normal School, Bar Dolota, Barpathar, Ghara, Ressoria, Bihuguri, Dimarugaon, Halleswar, Kalaigaon, Koriapara, Mirigaon, Pithakhowa, Sopai (Mangaldhai) and Udalguri (July 1869).<sup>48</sup> He also established hostels for Bodo students coming from remote villages like Borigaon, Bengbari etc. Another hostel was set up at Tezpur for meritorious Bodo students. Rothai Daimari of Sengkhari Church (who later changed over to the Baptist church) was one of the boarders of the hostel.<sup>49</sup>

The enthusiastic missionary work of Rev. Sydney Endle had a sudden break when his wife Sarah Embank passed away in 1895. Rev. Sydney Endle's love for the Bodos was immense and the number of schools established by him proved this.<sup>50</sup> There were in all 25 schools with 356 numbers of pupils. Rev. Sydney Endle breathed his last in 1907 at the age of 67.<sup>51</sup> The S.P.G Mission continued its work among the Bodos but with lesser enthusiasm. The S.P.G. Mission handed over their mission field to the American Baptist Missionaries in 1914.

The work of the Scottish Presbyterian Church started in the Eastern Duars of North Bengal. Here also the missionaries realised that illiteracy was a stumbling block in the progress of the society. The missionaries therefore stepped into to do something educationally. In 1870-1872, Rev. Conrad Bechtold established a primary school at Pankabari. By 2<sup>nd</sup> July 1871, there were 10 to 12 students admitted in Bechtold's school at Pankabari.<sup>52</sup> In the Eastern Duars in every Christian village, a Guild Primary School was built. The Church of Scotland Guild Mission of Eastern Duars Division supported them.<sup>53</sup>

In 1907, Rev. Peter Milne was appointed as a missionary chaplain to the Duars. The very next year a new primary school was opened at Kamakyaguri in 1908. In 1911, two other schools were opened at Mahakalguri and Dhantali. The one at Mahakalguri continued to be a lower primary school till 1924 and by 1925 it was upgraded to an upper primary school.<sup>54</sup>

Rev. W.W Fwrrie after being appointed as a missionary Chaplain in the Eastern Duars took a great interest to spread education among the Meches (Bodos) by



increasing the number of schools and by training the teachers. He realized that the students who completed the lower primary school dropped schools and became illiterate. Therefore he started a Residential Upper Primary for both boys and girls at Mahakalguri in 1925.

In 1927, Rev. A Francon William became incharge of the Scotland Church Guild Mission in Eastern Duars.<sup>55</sup> Under his supervision, the school's strength grew and its enrolment reached 65. There was a great desire for education among the Meches, He raised the Primary School to Middle English School inspite of many difficulties. In 1930, the Bengal Primary Education Bill was passed. The church selected two men for training at Kalimpong. In 1931, the fifth standard class was added to the Upper Primary School. The primary section was divided into three separate schools namely viz. 1. Mahakalguri Mission Girls Primary School, 2. Mahakalguri Mission Boys Primary School, 3. Mahakalguri Middle English School. In 1943 M.E school was made a fully fledged school as the other three schools were amalgamated.

Rev. A Francon William and his wife worked hard to improve the school and introduced scouts and guild classes. Motilal Narzinary was sent on deputation to Dacca for receiving training as a physical instructor. All his efforts for improving the general education among the Bodos were fruitful and several approached him to establish Guild Mission Primary (G. M. P) Schools. In the panchayat minutes it has been recorded that two schools were opened with hostels facilities at Mandabari and Amritpur. Though the hostels did not last long due to several hurdles but the endeavour demonstrated the eagerness of the Bodo mission for the spread of education among the Bodos.

Here the role of Rev. Jitnal Narzinary was immense. Even Mr. William admitted the services rendered by him and his associates while reporting about the progress of the Mahakalguri Mission M.E. School. He noted in his report, "Rev. Jitnal Narzinary, pastor and congregations' brothers took special interest for improving the enrolment of students of the institution and it was in great part through their efforts that school had a great enrolment all the time."

In 1937, Rev. G. McLaren took charge of Eastern Duars and he converted all Guild Mission Primary and M.E schools to Bengali medium schools from Hindi

medium. In a meeting held on 23<sup>rd</sup> April 1939 the Duars District Committee resolved that there be gradual change of language in all the schools which could be effective by conducting vacation classes for the instruction of all school staff in Bengali.

The result was encouraging as number of students increased in the schools and a need for higher class was felt more than ever by the guardians. The proposal was taken up in the panchayat and the missionary in –charge was required to appeal to the Foreign Mission Council (F.M.C) of Scotland to accept the proposal for upgrading the M.E School to a High School. This was to benefit and not only the Bodos but also all other inhabitants who were educationally backward. The main problems were the scarcity of fund and qualified teachers. The F.M.C initially did not approve the proposal as the area where the institution was to come up was inhospitable being infected with malaria. The Bodos felt neglected and took it as a challenge. They collected a sum of 1200/- for the cause and convinced the F.M.C to approve the proposal and to sanction Rs.14000/- towards it. In 1945, class VII was added to the M.E School. In 1953, after several attempts it was recognized as a High School by West Bengal Board of Secondary Education. Rev. G. McLaren was appointed as the founder Principal as well as the Secretary of the new High School. He also served as the Chaplain to the tea garden and missionary in- charge of Western and Eastern Duars Region. Rev. G. McLaren had to shoulder heavy responsibilities which deteriorated his health and had to go home. Meanwhile the mission field of the F.M.C required a lady missionary for which a proposal was placed. Accordingly, Miss Agnes W. F. McCutcheon was appointed as the first lady missionary to the Meches (Bodo). Soon after her arrival at Mahakalguri in 1957, she was sent to a language school in Darjeling and remained there till 1959. From 1<sup>st</sup> March 1959, she served as a part time teacher in Mahakalguri Mission High School. On 30<sup>th</sup> September of the same year, she was made the Assistant Head Mistress of the school.

The Eastern Duars Regional Church Board in a meeting held on 2/10/69 approved a proposal to set up a separate girls’ school within the same existing building. In a report by Miss Agnes W. F. McCutcheon it was said ‘the church council has accepted the proposal and the Overseas Council of the Church of Scotland have been moved for adequate fund for this and their response was encouraging. Thus the separate girls’ school was started in 1970 within the same building as the Mahakalguri Girls’ Jr. High School with the undersigned as the secretary and the Headmistress of

the school. The number of girls in the school was 130. The school received permanent assistance from Scotland Mission. The Regional Church Board also constructed a semi-pacca building. The school was raised to High School. Miss Agnes W.F. McCutcheon was so dedicated that she was lovingly named “Rumudi”.

The Indian Home Mission of the Lutheran Church had its headquarters in Dhumka district of present Jharkhand state. It was under this Indian Home Mission a colony was founded by a Norwegian Missionary Lars Oslen Skrefrud and a Danish Missionary Hans Peter Boerresen in the Gossaigaon sub-division of the present Kokrajhar district of Assam. Within the colony in and around Thakurpur a church and a school building were built. Rev. Skrefrud was a visionary and took two young Bodos Dorkanto and Sitaram to Ebenezer the headquarter of Indian Home Mission in Dumka. They were educated in Ebenezer Boys’ School and later baptized. Another two youth Ratia Boro and Dabaru also studied in Bengaria Boys School near Ebenezer.<sup>56</sup>

In 1926, a school was established which received its recognition as Middle English school in 1938. A boarding house was also attached to the school. Another mission centre was opened at Joema and Haraputa. Mr Holger Winding and Mrs. Esther Winding founded the two mission stations along with schools.

The Lutheran mission also started their educational activities from Gaurang Mission Station. By 1935, during the tenure of Mrs. Besie Fischer the Gaurang Mission Compound became an educational centre for the Bodos. Under her leadership the school developed and was upgraded to a Middle English School. It was a co-educational institution. In 1965, it was upgraded to a High School. Hostel facilities were also provided for both boys and girl students. In 1937, Rev. Malme joined Gaurang mission. During his period their mission field was divided into two districts- Bongaigaon and Gaurang districts. Along with new mission station a boarding school was started at Bongaigaon and completed in 1938. In 1939, Rev. Frossland and his wife founded a Leprosy Home and Hospital where they also established a school for the lepers.

In 1943, late Maguram started a school along with his brother Surju Moshahary and Jogendra Narzary with 13 students. The school was upgraded year after year till it was raised to a High School. This was the only educational centre in

and around that area. In 1959, another school was established by Rev. David Westborg at Mothambil. Through the educational institutions of the Lutheran Church thousands of Bodos were educated.

Catholic Church was not far from other denominations in its contribution in the field of education. Compared to other denominations Catholic missionaries were quite late to extend their activities among the Bodos. In 1953, Rev. Fr. Remus Morra took charge of Barpeta Mission. He was a man of vision and far sight.

He realized the need to work through education with the Bodos. A good number of Bodo boys used to be taken to Barpeta to prepare them for future leaders. Fr. Edward D' Souza SDB, a catholic missionary opined that Bengtol was a place where the catholic missionaries centred to work for the Bodos.<sup>57</sup> Rev. Fr. Joseph Maria Zubizarreta SDB was the first Catholic Missionary who gave heart and soul for the upliftment of the Bodos. It was in 1965 that he was assigned to open a mission centre at Bengtol in Kokrajhar district (now Chirang district). Accordingly in 24<sup>th</sup> June 1966 Rev. Fr. Joseph Maria Zubizarreta SDB arrived at Bengtol. He stayed in a little hut and launched his mission work.

In a time span of one year they built a small house for the fathers and a boarding house for boys. In 1968, a school with both Assamese and Bodo mediums was opened with 68 students. Of these students 50 were boarders and the rest 18 were day scholars. They named the school as St. Joseph's School. It had classes from I to VII. The school was a thatch house. But by 1970, a building came up which was used as class rooms as well as a hostel for the boys. It was recognized by the government of Assam on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1972. The lower primary section was provincialised in 1973. But the upper primary could not be provincialised due to non-fulfilment of the required criteria mainly the teachers. In June 1979, St Mary's Convent was established which was dedicated for the poor and the deprived girls of the area.

The complete administration of the school was under the able leadership of Fr. Joseph Maria Zubizarreta SDB. He was helped in all administration affairs by Mr. Albis Mochahary a young teacher from the then undivided Kamrup, now Baksha. In 1978, English medium instruction was also introduced. Missionary Sisters of Mary Help of Christians were given the responsibility of looking after the English section. While the



**St. Joseph M.E School, Estd. 1968**

Assamese and the Bodo sections were managed by Mr. Albis Mochahary who committed himself to the development of the school till his retirement in 2009. On 22<sup>nd</sup> March 1987, a young very highly qualified priest Fr. Basil Koikara joined Bengtol mission. He was entrusted with the school and the boarding activities of the mission. He had the credit of raising the standard of the students in their studies and music. He served the school till June 1988. Fr. Ronald SDB, another young priest replaced him to help in the school and the boarding section. In 1989, the first batch of the matric examination from St. Joseph's school appeared. The result was excellent with flying colours to the joy and jubilation of Fr. Joseph Maria Zubizarreta SDB and the school staff. On that occasion Mr. Albis Mochahary who dedicated 25 years of his life as a teacher and headmaster of the Assamese and Bodo medium L.P. and M.E school, was gratefully remembered. Late Mathias Moshahary was also remembered for the valuable service rendered.

In order to enhance the literacy among the Bodos, the Bengtol mission, has made a provision to award stipends and scholarships to the deserving students especially from the Catholic Church. During the last 25 years Bengtol has produced many outstanding students who have been playing vital roles in the church and society after the completion of their higher studies. In 1989, the first batch of Matric

candidates from English Medium High School Sections appeared for the Matric Examinations and they came out with flying colours.

In 1991, the English medium section of the school was separated and converted to a separate High School. Some of the teachers who served the St. Joseph's School Bengtol were Alexius Basumatary, Santosh Narzary, James Narzary, Benedict Narzary, Reben Mochahari and Ringkhang Hajowary besides the religious fathers, sisters and brothers. As the school was a missionary institute the authorities in subsequent periods continued to be the priest and from the religious order, they left no stone unturned to perform to best of their abilities for the welfare of the school and always kept up the standard of the school. It was in 1990 that the first batch of the St. Joseph's English High School Bengtol, appeared. School was re-christened as Don Bosco School and later as Don Bosco High School Bengtol. The Catholic missionaries also started a hostel at Kokrajhar for the college students. This was a dream come true of Fr. Joseph Maria Zubizarreta SDB. The hostel was initially under the supervision of Fr. K.V. George, SDB, who was an educationist of high repute. Rustom Goyary of Ramfalbil of Kokrajhar district was one of the students of Don Bosco hostel in 1997.<sup>58</sup> Similar works began to take place wherever the Catholic missionaries had their mission centres. Some of the prominent Catholic schools established in Bodo dominated areas were Sacred Heart School, Udalguri, Sacred Heart, Rowta, St Teresa's School, Ambagaon, Savio School Bhairabhunda, Don Bosco School, Tangla, Don Bosco School, Dimakuchi, Don Bosco School, Mazbat etc.

In 1998, Bongaigaon Gana Seva Society was set up with its headquarter at Bongaigaon. It was dedicated to the uplift of the people of the area. It was to educate, train and assist the children of poor economic background. It also held adult literary class for non- school going children and working adults who had no opportunity for formal education. School dropped outs were referred to the technical training institute. The Bongaigaon Gana Seva Society had its own objectives in initiating Balwadi Schools in the mission centres such as Gossaigaon, Saralbil, Mornai and Kachugaon. There were 26 Balwadi schools in all with 51 teachers and 2 supervisors. Each centre had 100 to 200 students who came for education.<sup>59</sup>

## LITERATURE

While reviewing the history of education of the Bodos it has been found that the Anglican Church and its missionaries were the ones who introduced formal education for the people of Darrang in the 1850s. Bodo language during those days was a scattered tribal tongue with no script and written literature. In the absence of formal texts the Assamese and Bengali primers were made used to teach the Bodo students in the schools. It was felt necessary that to teach and preach among the Bodos using the mother tongue was important. So attempts were to study the structure of the Bodo language and the script to be used. The christian missionaries adopted the Roman script. While providing scope to the Bodo Children to acquire education in mother tongue Bodo primers were made. In 1884 Rev. Sydney Endle compiled his manual of the Bodo language “An Outline of Grammar of the Kachari Language” for the first time. He also wrote his monograph “The Kachari” which happened to be the first book of its kind on the Bodos. It was published from London in 1911. A part of the New Testament was also translated into Bodo which was compiled with the help of Charles Kamal Mushahari who was a catechist at Mandalmokha and Timothy Namga Swargiary of Ghagra and others. The S.P.G. Mission’s prayer books were also translated by him in the Bodo language. In recognition of his linguistic studies and his eminence as a worker in the mission field, he was elected as an Honorary Fellow of St Augustine’s College of Canterbury (U.K.) in 1891. He was also honoured with Canonary by the Bishop of Calcutta which was refused as it might involve absence from his missionary duties.<sup>60</sup>

The contribution of Rev. Sydney Endle to Bodo literature and grammar need to be analyzed and honestly valued. Maniram Machari ex- President of Bodo Sahitya Sabha described Rev. Sydney Endle as follows- “He learned Bodo language and wrote the first Kachari Grammar and published it in 1884...”<sup>61</sup> Sydney Endle was the first person who gave a new life to the language by writing folk tales and translating the Bible stories. He had the credit of collecting series of Kachari folk tales for fifteen years till 1906. These folk tales and stories were full of morals and gave a pen-picture of the society, their faith, their traditions and simple way of the country life of the humble folk.

Northern Assam Deanery published “Bodo Bhajan Methai” a Bodo folk song for use in the churches. In 1972, prayer books like Baidisina Aroj Bijab, Forbuni Bhojo, Fung Arw Mwnaibilini Aroj Bijab, etc were published and used in the church service under the N.A.D.<sup>62</sup>

The Presbyterian Mission also had much to offer in the literary progress of the Bodos. With the increase in the number of Bodo Christians in their field, need was felt for the Bible to be translated into Bodo language and accordingly Bodo hymn books were produced. Gospel stories began to be translated into Bodo. Rev. C. Bechtold, who worked 33 years among the Bodos ventured to return to India and involved himself in the translation works with the help of a Mechi (Bodo) teacher. In 1906, he came up with the translation of the gospel of St. Mark, Mathew, Luke and Acts of the Apostle in Bengali script and got them published in the same year. He also translated a christian hymn book into Mechi (Bodo) in 1907. During the ministry of Rev. A.F William, a Mech (Bodo) catechism was published. Another book ‘A Mech Readers for Beginner’ was also published. Rev. George McLaren also came out with a beautiful book entitled, “The Star Leads On” to teach children in their mother tongue. He wrote a Bodo primer named “Sigang Forai jennai Lekha” in Bengali script.<sup>63</sup>

The Lutheran missionaries as they arrived among the Bodos gave themselves to learn the language and used it for evangelization among the Bodos. Rev. L.O Skrefsrud at the early stage of his mission work visited the Bodo villages and tried to pick up the language. He also took the help of the two young boys whom he educated at Ebenezer Boy’s school at Bangaria. With their assistance, he translated the Lord’s Prayer, the Creed, the Ten Commandments, catechism, gospels etc in Bodo language. He also compiled a small Bodo grammar.

Another founding Lutheran missionary was Rev. A Kristiansen who mastered the Bodo language and brought forth a number of literary works in Bodo. He wrote the Bodo Bible History, compiled hymn book, Bodo Reader, daily readings and got them printed in Bodo language. He also involved himself in translation works. In 1934, he began the translation of the first gospel of St Mathew. The gospels of Mark, Luke and John were completed in 1936. The whole New Testament was translated in 1937 and published in 1938 by the British and Foreign Bible Society. Danish Home



Board offered financial help of Kr. 3000 for publication. The revision of the same was done in 1939.

Rev. Hakon Holvorsrud of the same church wrote a Bodo grammar and also compiled a Bodo dictionary. He took up the task of translating the Old Testament. In this endeavour he was assisted by Rev. Maguram Moshahary. Thus the whole Bible except the seven books of the Old Testament was translated by the Lutheran Mission. The translated version of the Bible began to be used by all christian denominations including the Catholics. In this connection, Moniram Masahary a catholic scholar comments, ‘the works of the Lutheran Church will be remembered forever by the Bodos for what they did. The Bodos will remain indebted to this church especially to Holvorud for translating’.

It may be mentioned that while translating the christian literature, there was a problem with the use of script and it required to be discussed with the Bodo literature committee. So, different Christian denominations formed the Bodo Christian Leaders Committee. It was decided that different bodies could continue to use the script that they were using. For further translation of the Bible into Bodo, Bodo Christian Board (B.C.B) was formed. Through this board, the book of Psalm was compiled and published in 1961 and the book of Genesis was done in 1965.

This board ventured to translate the whole Bible. Rev. H. Holvosrud and Rev. Maguram Mosahary formed another committee named Bodo Bible Translation Committee and started the translation work from 1967. Thus the Bodo Bible- Gwthar Bible, was completed and published in 1981. Revision of the Old Testament in Bodo commenced in 1982. A new committee of the Bodo Bible Consult committee was formed in 1984. This committee brought out the newly translated New Testament Bodo Bible, which was released on 10<sup>th</sup> May 1991.

The Baptist missionaries were not far from contributing in the development of the Bodo literature. Rev. A. C Bower an American Baptist missionary learned the Bodo language and composed several Bodo songs and published Christian literature in Bodo language. He also composed hymnal and translated his message into Bodo language.<sup>64</sup> The unpublished note of Rev. George Richard Kampfer was also as excellent expression of literature for the Bodos. The book threw much light on the activities of the missionaries in the North East Region of India and how they lived life

in varied circumstances dedicating their whole lives for the sake of gospel and the people. These notes were full of lure and romances with experience of becoming a missionary in a strange land, the land of the gallows and tigers, the land of the Kacharis, the land of the head-hunters and of the wildest tribes of North Eastern Province of India.<sup>65</sup>

Catholic Church too in a big way contributed to the Bodos in the field of literature. It was Rev. Fr. Orestes Marengo, SDB, who initiated the literary work for the Bodos while evangelizing among the Bodos. He mastered the Bodo language and prepared the first prayer and catechism books in Bodo. He was replaced by Fr. Earnest Zanon. He also learnt the Bodo language. One of the major literary contributions made by the Catholic Church for the Bodos was the publication of the first Boro- English Dictionary by Young Catholic Christian Association (Y.C.C.A) in 1985. Following this no recorded literary activities were available till 1994 when Barama Swdwmsri Harimu Afat was established. Barama Swdwmsri Harimu Afat was the concept of Rev. Kolandaiswamy, a committed missionary for the cause of the Bodos. All the activities of the organization were executed under the patronage of the Catholic Mission, Barama, Baksa. Its objectives were to promote the indigenous Bodo culture and literature. Along with Fr. Kolandaiswamy, other founding members included Fr. Xavier Basumatary, Mr. Obed Basumatary, Mr Soben Narzary, Mr. Jaiklong Basumatary, Mrs. Renu Boro and Dr. Ashyut Narzary. Initially, the Barama Swdwmsri Harimu Afat undertook two main projects: Production of a documentary film on the Bodo legendary figure, Basiram Jwhwlao and preservation of original Kherai music. The members felt that Kherai is the main festival of the Bodos and has its distinct music but its original tunes were varying with each passing day. Therefore efforts were made to preserve the original tunes of 25 Kherai music in two cassette with necessary notations. The director of Gerua Serja Harimu, Afat Mr. Kant Swargiary Kr. Suni the author of 'Gwdan Dengkhw' extended co-operation with Hindustani and Western notations to the music. The documentary film on Basiram Jwhwlao was also produced. Its script was prepared by Mr. Maniram Mochahary who did a research on the project. The music and the attire were traditional depicting originality of the Bodo culture.

The B.S.H.A also published books on health care, good manners for the middle and High school students, on total education, on weaving designs of the

Bodos. It also extended co-operation in the translation of religious literature. Books on Holy week, Missal, Church History and life of Jesus were translated into Bodo language. The organization further proceeded to take up the publication of an Anglo-Bodo Dictionary. The research and compilation of the work was taken up for 25, 000 words. Besides B.S.H.A published the following books: Dehasriri, Sodomsri, Gaham Akutai, Motori-I, Motori-II, Basiram Jwhwlao, Boro Agor, Subun Tunlai-II, Haba, Kerai Music, Goujuthani Jarimin, Abraham, Hinjaoo, Khain Arw Habil and Araibw Jojo Lwgwse.

Another devout Catholic who was closely associated with the B.S.H.A was Moniram Mochahary who published several books to his credit. He brought out the full fledged Bodo English Dictionary in Roman script in 1985, Swdwmsri Kherai Tunes 24 in 1995, Bodo Raokanti Class VII-1996, Sase Laokarni Mijink (novel) in 1997, Bodo Self teaching in 1997 and Bodo Raokanti Class IX & X 1998.

The contribution of Catholic Church in the development of Bodo literature is no less compared to other organizations. Production of Christian literature had their evangelistic objectives but they all enriched the literary horizon of the Bodos.

## **MEDICAL SERVICES**

In the field of medical services the Anglican missionaries were the first to come to the picture as they were the first to arrive among the Bodos. While touring the villages, Rev. Sydney Endle witnessed infant mortality malnutrition, epidemic diseases like malaria, cholera which were very common among the villagers. He felt the need of the time and established several hospitals and medical centres in the Bodo dominated areas. It was at Bengbari one such medical centre was established which was later shifted to Harisinga.<sup>66</sup>

Mr. Uman K Marak who founded the Lower Primary School at Tukrajhar used to keep a small dispensary within the mission compound to treat the sick students and the people around. For the early missionaries it was difficult to extend medical service as they were stationed at Gauhati. It was only on the days of the annual conference that medical service could be extended to the people.<sup>67</sup>

Mrs. Gwenyth Crofts had always kept a supply of simple medicines in her little cupboard. In 1948, she treated 40 people who came to the mission house for medical treatment with her medicine that was stocked in her cupboard. In this way since then missionaries have been treating the poor and sick people from village dispensaries or pharmacies.<sup>68</sup>

For the first time Peter N. Wing opened the dispensaries at Barpathar in 1948.<sup>69</sup> Initially he alone managed the dispensary. Shortly, he was joined by Miss Joyce McDonald who was a trained nurse and took charge of the medical ministry. She often used to visit patients at night. She fought against the ignorance, dirt and superstition.<sup>70</sup> Another nurse missionary Jean Harry started work at Baghpara. She used to carry medicine in the cupboard and give to patients whom she came across. Dulice Cheney was another medical worker who joined the dispensary in 1953.<sup>71</sup> In 1954, eight thousand patients were recorded to have come to the dispensary for treatment. They treated patients of different ethnic groups such as the Bodos, Santals, Muslim and the Oraons.<sup>72</sup>

In 1956, the government of India decreed that dispensaries be supervised by the doctors. Thereafter Dr. John Webster was appointed and posted at Tukrajhar.<sup>73</sup> In 1958, another dispensary was started at Tukrajhar. Dr. John Webster upgraded the dispensary to a hospital with maternity facility. In 1962, one more medical centre was opened at Bamungaon. Dr. Webster took its charge. A maternity centre was also opened at Tukrajhar on 16<sup>th</sup> September 1967.<sup>74</sup> It consisted of six-bed ward, two delivery rooms, stock rooms, scrub rooms, operating theatre and screened veranda on north and south sides.

By then the Bodo, the Garo and the Rabha unions were included in the decision making programmes for the medical work in their respective areas. These unions had dispensary committees to discuss and decide where and when the new dispensaries would be established. They also sent some members of their churches to study and undergo nursing courses who after completing could be employed in their dispensaries. Accordingly, John Marak and Katiram Basumatary qualified as nurses and worked in Tukrajhar dispensaries.<sup>75</sup> Similarly, a certain Loren also graduated as a pharmacist. Further, the church took initiative to sponsor selected individuals belonging to their church. Rohendra and Omenrendra were two boys selected by the

A.B.M.S to study in Mount Hermon at Darjeeling and later to go for medicine. Another boy, Pradip Narzary also graduated in medicine under the A.B.M.S scholarship. Dr. Pradip Narzary has been contributing immensely as a doctor and medical superintendent of the Crofts Memorial Hospital.<sup>76</sup> Established in 1956 and named after first A.B.M.S missionaries, Wilfred and Gwenyth Crofts, Croft Memorial Hospital has grown into a self-sustained hospital rendering low cost and effective health care services to all people irrespective of caste, creed and colours.



**Crofts Memorial Hospital, Tukrajhar, (Assam), Estd.1956**

In Darrang district, Rev. George Richard Kampfer introduced the first medical facility. He had two nurses who were trained as compounders by Dr. Kirby. They were Silding Sangma and Mr. Neharsingh Sangma.<sup>77</sup>

At Harisinga, a dispensary was started and managed by two missionary nurses viz. Miss Joy Philip and Mrs. Dorothy. By 25<sup>th</sup> March 1959, the dispensary was raised to a hospital named Baptist Christian Hospital. Some of the doctors and nurses who served in Baptist Christian Hospital at Harisinga were Dr. B. Mulford, Miss Joy Philip, Miss Doroty Drotz, Miss Arlene Jensen, Miss Lorna Del Nelson and Miss Betty Person. Among the Indian doctors were Dr. R. Daimari, Dr. H. Ghonglad, Dr. (Mrs) Narzary, Dr. T. Samuel, Dr. S. Deory, Dr. J.H. Boro, Dr. Tom Bing, Dr. L. Boro and Dr. Sanowal.<sup>78</sup> Through this medical centre tens and thousands of patients received medical care.

Another major organization which contributed medical services to the Bodos was the Lutheran Mission. Initially, they opened three medical hospitals namely Parkijuli Christian Hospital, Santipara Leprosy Home and Hospital and Sevapur Christian Hospital. Dr. O. Forman served in Sevapur as the first doctor. Other doctors who served in Sevapur Christian Hospital were Dr. Dagmar Pederson, Dr. B.B. Bogh, Dr. Johs. G. Andersen and Dr. Haugstad. As per records by 1965, 1293 indoor patients and over 9000 outdoor patients were treated in the Sevapur Christian Hospital.<sup>79</sup> The mission also established out clinics in Haraputa, Gaurang, Bongaigaon, Gurubasa and Subaijhar to extend modern medical treatment to the people around those places.

The Lutheran nurses have the credit of opening a Leprosy Home and Hospital in West Assam for the first time. It was established at Santipara village by Rev. And Mrs. Frossland.<sup>80</sup> It also extended out centre services at places like Gaurang, Gurubhsa etc where several hundred leprosy patients received treatment. The mission involved in arranging a woman's programme and taught the people how to prevent the spread of infectious diseases. The Hospital at Parkijuli has been one of the best privately run hospitals in Assam. It was established by Dr. David Westborg in 1951, keeping in view the medical need of the people living in remote villages bordering Bhutan.<sup>81</sup> The mission has produced several native doctors to serve in the hospital. Through this medical centre the mission has been able to reach out the people in need.

Catholic Church was also another denomination which involved in the medical ministry in the Bodo dominated places. A small dispensary was started by Rev. Fr. Joseph Maria Zubizarreta SDB. Through this, programme on malaria eradication and other tropical diseases used to be conducted.<sup>82</sup> The need for medical service from the church was strongly felt with the passing days as there were no such facilities available in remote areas. In view of this Rt. Rev. Joseph Mithathany, the then bishop of Tezpur took imitative and invited some religious sisters to work in some mission centres. One congregation of sisters of Nazareth from Aluva, Kerala responded positively. A team of three sisters: Antonette, Elsy and Genesis arrived at Soraibil Parish on 29<sup>th</sup> September 1978. Initially, they had to encounter a contradictory life style from that of their native land. They treated the patients and taught them how to prevent themselves from diseases like malaria, tuberculosis, typhoid etc. In the dispensaries, they not only treated the boarders but also extended services to the

people around. Fr. Marengo had the following unforgettable experience: One day, he received a delegation of Bodo neophytes from one of the villages of this area and they informed him about cholera which broke out in that area. They also asked for medicines. Fr. Marengo went with them and brought the medicine which were available and told them to distribute them, one each to the village people and to gather in the chapel every evening to pray. Later on, it was found that in most of the villages people had died, but none of the neophytes of that particular village was touched by the epidemic. This village was later christened as “Don Bosco Berha” or Don Bosco village by Fr. Scuderi.<sup>83</sup> Fr. John O’ Day is also well remembered for his untiring dedication and kindness towards the poor and the sick. He left Assam in August 1969. After his departure Fr. Mathew Kadavunkal, SDB, joined Bengtol Mission as an assistant to Rev. Fr. Joseph Maria Zubizarreta, SDB. He too is well remembered too for his generosity and kindness towards the poor and the sick. Under the Bongaigaon diocese of Catholic Church an organization called Bongaigaon Gana Seva Society (B.G.S.S) several medical programmes arranged such as Safe Motherhood and Child Survival (S.M.C.S), antenatal and post delivery care, cleanliness drive etc. B.G.S.S in collaboration with the North East Diocesan Social Forum, Gauhati started a programme titled “Polio Eradication and Routine Immunization and Behaviour Change Community Programme”. It has also organised several tuberculosis eradication programme in the villages. The Bodos as dominated race in the region have benefitted much from the missionaries in the field of health care. Medical ministry has been a part of the evangelization mission of the missionaries.

## **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

The christian missionaries did not confine to the evangelization parameters. They went beyond it to reach out to the people in the field of education, literature, health and economy. They witnessed the pathetic economic condition of the simple, humble Bodo people and could not compromise themselves without taking up some developmental projects. Christian missionaries of different denominations ventured to take up with varied developmental projects for the Bodos and others.

Bhoot Pandit who accompanied Rev. Sydney Endle in most of his tours to different tea gardens for liturgical purpose used to observe the techniques of tea plantation and developed a vision with a mission. He wanted to give an example of an enterprise and work culture for economic sustainability. He began tea plantation of his own on a 15 bighas of land at Dowamokha village by collecting seedling/tea plants from Ghagra tea garden.<sup>84</sup> He became the first tea grower among the Bodos taking high risks in the endeavour. He supplied the green leaves to the Ghagra factory carrying them through deplorable roads infested with wild animals. However this tea plantation disappeared in the course of time due to lack of proper maintenance and fragmentation of land in the family.

The Baptist mission under Rev. George Richard Kampfer came up with the idea of economic development for self sustainment. He focussed on the women folk and established a weaving centre in 1919.<sup>85</sup> Under the guidance and supervision of the missionaries students from Harisinga M.E School started an experiment in agriculture in 1937. The boys worked every morning for two hours hoeing, planting and building fences around their gardens. The government recognised their work and sent an inspector of Agriculture Department to teach the boys the art of cultivation.<sup>86</sup>

The Australian Baptist Missionary Society (A.B.M.S) also established vocational training centres and purchased a huge area of cultivable land to make the mission self sufficient in every sphere of existence.<sup>87</sup> Rev. Wilf Gwenth Crofts bought a large area of land, a tractor and a water pumping machine to irrigate the water inaccessible land. They had two objectives one was to make the mission a self sufficient mission and the other was to demonstrate how the high-tech machine could be applied in agriculture. They also established vocational training institute for the young people.<sup>88</sup> The school established by Jean Harry in Baghpara in 1951 also introduced agriculture weaving and bamboo work curriculum.<sup>89</sup>

Rev. P. N Wing was moved to see the poverty among the believers. He decided and struggled to remove it in some ways. One way towards this end was to call the believers to the mission and plough the field to grow jute which would fetch money to run the mission. It was with an intention to create a spirit of co-operative movement and arouse a sense of unity among the believers. In 1951, he also established an industrial training institute for the unemployed youth in Tukrajhar.<sup>90</sup>



Rev. Staunton was himself an expert carpenter. He wanted the youth to take up the trade for their livelihood.

The Australian lady missionaries namely Miss Jean Harry and Miss Fle Horwood taught Bodo women to knit woollen sweater and scarf. They also taught them to keep the books, write cheques and operate bank accounts so that they were in a position to manage any financial affairs when the missionaries would leave them.<sup>91</sup>

After the departure of the A.B.M.S, the church had to sustain on their own. In 1985, one time revivalist to Goalpara Boro Baptist Church Union (G.B.B.C.U), T. Aonok brought the World Vision of India (W.V.I) and G.B.B.C.U into partnership to work for the economic upliftment of the Bodos where they felt necessary.<sup>92</sup> Amteka area was one of their concerns. This was an area facing serious water scarcity, health problem etc due to drought and lack of communication facilities. At this situation the World Vision of India (W.V.I) came up with a project called “Amteka Seed Project” to bring about social and economic developments. The Amteka Seed Project was later promoted to Amteka Community Development Project in 1986. The project was successful and continued for eight years.<sup>93</sup> Enosh Basumatary Secretary cum officer informed that 30 ring wells which were of fifteen feet depth were constructed. Besides, other developmental skills, like weaving, tailoring and agricultural trainings were taken up by Amteka Community Development Project.<sup>94</sup>

Sulen Basumatary Principal of Tukrajhar Higher Secondary School and secretary of the G.B.B.C.U declared the year 1992 as “Year of Self Sufficiency” under Bodo Vision 2000.<sup>95</sup> The declaration was intended to motivate and train the church on the family economy especially in the field of agricultural output thus preparing the people to give more to the Lord’s service.<sup>96</sup> It also had its objectives to guide and arrange training in collaboration with the government for the economic upliftment of the church members. It was not only the soul that the church is concerned with but also the body. Therefore attempts were made to explore more avenues to work either in partnership with the government or independently to transform the economy of the members to a better status.<sup>97</sup> Similarly the Boro Baptist Convention (B.B.C) served as a resource agency for the development and execution of plans and programmes for community upliftment through training and sponsorships.<sup>98</sup> Thus, the two prominent Baptist organizations i.e. the Boro Baptist

Convention and Goalpara Boro Baptist Church Union committed themselves for the spiritual and economic upliftment of the members.

Another Church organisation that is to be reckoned with for the commitment to economic growth of the Bodo was the Lutheran Church, the Northern Evangelical Lutheran Church in particular. Economic growth of the members of the church was its concerns. In 1939, Rev. and Mrs. Frossland founded the Santipara Leprosy Home and Hospital. They wanted the patient to live happily after they returned home. During free time they engaged the patients in learning some areas of economic growth. The patients were taught handicrafts and engaged in farming, house building, road making, animals keeping etc. The patients who were in position physically worked during their free time in the plot of land donated to the hospital. The cultivation by the patients enabled them to meet the food and other necessities in the hospitals.<sup>99</sup> It was reported by Dr. Olav Hone that with the treatment of new and better drugs, surgery and physiotherapy number of leprosy patients were cured and returned homes to live normal life. They returned home not only cured from diseases but also with some kind of skills for better livelihood and to give witness to God's love for humanity.<sup>100</sup>

The establishment of Tabitha Weaving Udyog (Industry) in 1990 at Gaurang, Kokrajhar, Assam and Mary Martha Weaving centre at Tukrajhar, Chirang, Assam helped the Bodo women as well men to build themselves economically.<sup>101</sup>

In 1996, Lutheran World Service India Trusts, a Non- Government Organization (N.G.O) was established at Gossaigaon, Assam.<sup>102</sup> It introduced Village Development Council (V.D.C) and self help groups in villages to help people to be economically independent. It also organised training on agriculture and supplied seeds and agricultural equipment like tractors to the farmers and extended scholarships to poor students to study. Another (non-government organization) N.G.O i.e the Agriculture Integrated Development Project (A.I.D.P) was founded by the Bongaigaon Diocese of the Lutheran Church.<sup>103</sup> Initially, they helped the poor families to develop kitchen gardens and other agricultural related works. The foundation of Socio-Economic Development project at Haraputa (Assam) also helped the Bodos to rise economically. It is worth referring here that the co-operative 'Dayalu Somoria Fund', i.e. Kind Samaritan Fund was instituted by the G.B.B.C.U in order to grant loan to the farmers to buy seeds, agricultural implements, fertilizer

etc.<sup>104</sup> It is seen that besides depending on agricultural products, Bodos could be skilful in carpentry, weaving and other equally useful trades. Missionaries working among the Bodos were able to exploit some of these talents in order to raise the living standard of the Bodos. The larger goal was to improve the well being of the community.<sup>105</sup>

Roman Catholic Church has been keeping for all time the economic development of the people of their domain. In Barpeta, Rev. Fr. Morra, SDB, established a cattle farm with exotic breed of cows. He also started a large poultry farm and well-stocked piggery. Agriculture was also extensively carried out within the vast land the mission possessed.<sup>106</sup> At Udalguri Mission, a weaving centre was established where Bodo women were engaged. It flourished within a very short span of time. But due to mismanagement, the enterprise was closed down. At Bengtol Mission, Rev. Fr. Joseph Maria Zubizarreta SDB introduced a rice mill, a mini power house, poultry, dairy farm, piggery and a fish pond. Several Bodo youth were engaged to look after them enabling them to have some income of their own. In Barama Mission, a Tribal Women Welfare Centre was opened for the welfare of the Bodo women. These welfare schemes helped the Bodos to improve their economic condition. The missionaries also had economic consideration for the poor parents. Minimal fees were charged on the children of the poor parents. Bosco Reach Out and Don Bosco Institution, Gauhati were two organizations rendering services to the poor children through different projects. Bosco Skill Mission is one through which school drop-out boys and girls were trained and sent out for jobs to other parts of the country. Bongaigaon Gana Seva Society is another organisation which also has been extending the similar services to the school drop-outs. Besides, it has also involved itself in availing self-employed schemes, provided training in leadership, effective communications, management etc. The mission intends to create gainful self employment to the disadvantaged sections, ensuring sustainable livelihood and improved quality of life.

The objectives have been successful as targeted sections of population have benefited. They have acquired improved capacity and skills in modern methods of agriculture and livestock and enhanced their income. Community or family began to have better production and better living. Catholic missionaries since their arrival have

kept up the economic aspect of the society as a mission to venture into wherever they have worked.

## **HUMANITARIAN SERVICES**

Humanitarian service is a short term aid reached out to the people in need in times of natural calamities and disasters. It is a kind of service extended to people for a short period till long term helps replace them by the government or other established organizations.

Christian missionaries are ever alert to any situation where and when the victims need to be assisted. Way back in 1996 and in 1998, ethnic clashes broke out between the Bodos and the Santals in the districts of Kokrajhar, Bongaigaon and Dhubri. As per records and statistics available there were 1, 77, 240 persons from 24, 370 families being displaced from 341 original villages.<sup>107</sup> They had to be sheltered in 48 relief camps. Several lives and properties were destroyed. In such situation, the missionaries of different denominations came forward for assistance. Roman Catholic Church under the leadership of Rev. Arch Bishop Thomas Menampampil, organised a large team of volunteers including religious, doctors, nurses and people of good will from different parts of the country and went to the affected areas with material help. The scorching heat of the time and other obstacles could not deter them from rendering services.<sup>108</sup> The Church Auxiliary for Social Action (C.A.S.A) was called to sponsor material aids of any possible quantity.<sup>109</sup> Along with the Catholic Church other denominations joined to contribute in all possible ways to the affected people. Lutheran World Service India Trust based at Bongaigaon provided stipends for the riot victim children at later stage, distributed bicycles to women, distributed free texts books and arranged free tuition in the camps.<sup>110</sup>

Other than material aids the missionaries have tried to create an atmosphere of peaceful co-existence. It tried to bring the youth of different ethnic groups to communicate with each other and to enable them to feel secured among them. They have been organizing family visits, family counselling, cultural exchange, inter-religious dialogue and awareness programme on the need for peace and prosperity.

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## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Protul Kumar Bhobora, “Few Pages from the Unpublished Notes of Rev. G.R. Kampher”, collected in Assamao American Baptist Christian Missionary Fwr (1836Khri-1969Khri), published Mr. Rihon Daimary, Minister of Public Health Engineering Department, Govt. of Assam, Udalguri, 2008, pp. 100-101.

<sup>2</sup> O.L. Snaitag, *Christianity and Social Change in Northeast India: A Study of the Role of Christianity in Social Change among the Khasi-Jaintia Hill Tribes of Meghalaya*, Shillong, Vendrame Institute/Calcutta, Firma KLM Private Ltd., 1993, p. 165

<sup>3</sup>Ratul Basumatary, *Gospel and Bodos: An Ethnographic Study*, New Delhi 1993, presented to Bible School, Tukrajhar, p. 73.

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- <sup>29</sup> Pratul K. Bhabora, Biography of Rev. Khalason Mochahari, pp. 49-52, O. L. Swanson, report of American Baptist Work in Assam, India, 1927, pp. 4-5 cited in Satyendra kr. Sarmah, *Op. Cit.* p.102.
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- <sup>31</sup> *Muthi sawl* is a unique system attached by the missionaries to the Christian Bodo women that before preparing their food everyday they had to deposit a handful of rice for the charity of church.
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<sup>58</sup> Rustom Goyary, Junior Assistant (Dept- Irrigation, BTAD, Assam), Vill- Ramfalbil Kokrajhar, BTAD (Assam), Age-45 years, 23/04/2017 (An informant).

<sup>59</sup> Fr. Selvaraj Ignatius, *History of the Catholic Church in the Diocese of Bongaigaon, Christ Light of the World Publication, Bishop's House, Bongaigaon, 2008*, pp.24-25.



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