

**POST COLONIAL BODO SOCIETY WITH REFERENCE TO THE STATUS OF
THE WOMEN**

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CHAPTER- VI

CONCLUSION

Women played a significant role in the growth and development of a particular society. The identification of women is being realized in the equal development of a society. No doubt, differences vary from society to society in respect of the norms and policies of the society. But it remains as an important prospect to examine the status, role and rights of the women in the society on equal footing. The contributions and roles that they played in the society is an immense credibility that had brought much significance in the development and change of the society at various aspects. The women in India since the early period were found in impressive positions in the society having high value and possessed equal respect in the society. But due to the changes in time, ruler and policy in the later period, the rights and dignity of women came down and again due to the various socio-reformation movements in the country at different period of time, the value and respect towards women were somehow restored in the modern period. The tribal women in the North Eastern India were also found having the same equal rights enjoyed in the society. They dwelled equal responsibility and attained high respectable position in the socio-economic-religious and cultural aspects but found little negligence in the hereditary rights excluding the matrilineal character enjoyed by the *Khasi* and the *Garo* societies in the North Eastern women in India. Amongst the other tribal societies in Assam, the Bodo women had significant status, role and position. They are given equal respect and share equal responsibility along with the male counterpart. The Bodo women attained much higher positions and enjoyed equal rights in the yardstick of the family and acquired important place in the society.

As the history of the Bodos is concerned, they are considered as one of the original settlers of Assam and forming the largest living ethnic tribal community belonging to the Tibeto-Burman linguistic family. They belong to the Mongolian

stock race, the people living to the north of the Himalayas, China and Tibet as concluded by different writers and scholars. It is mentioned that the land was known as 'Bod' where these inhabitants lived were considered their ancient homeland. As a result the term *Bod/Bodo/Bodho/Boro* was supposed to be originated from the word/name *Bod*. The history says that Indo-Mongoloids who were living in the eastern and the north eastern during the epic period were known as *Kirata*. Thus, it is taken into consideration that along with *Bodo*, the Nagas, the Kukis, the Garos and Meities were also believed to be descendents of the *Kirata* as mentioned by many scholars and writers. In this theoretical conclusion majority of the Bodo scholars also agreed and stated that the Bodos were originated from the *Kirata* family. And this word 'Kirata' was mentioned in the *Sukla-Yajurveda* and *Atharvaveda* which shows the tracts of eastern Himalayan mountains region as their original home. So, it is affirmed that the original home for the Bodos was probably the upper Hwang-Ho river region of China as concluded by the different historians and scholars.

The Bodos have their own unique socio-traditions, cultural-identity, language and religion. In the historical base of the cultural identity the Bodo/*Kachari* people have their own unique faith of religion, cultural beliefs, traditions and customs. Since, they were mostly acquainted with the nature they maintained their distinctive cultural traditions, customs, beliefs, social system, food habits, dresses in variant form of cultural development. The Traditional cultural history of Bodos basically constructed on the basis of such oral history focused on folk tales, folk songs, legends, myths, proverbs etc. Their traditional religion is known as *Bathou*; they worshipped *Bwrai Bathou* (Bwrai- Old God Father), but in the eighteenth century the cultural assimilation started to Hinduism and other religions as it is the outcome of the religious transitions in the society in the sense of religion. The Bodos maintained their traditions and culture, their knowledge of ethical and mythical, their folk culture shows that the Bodos have rich culture having been practicing since the time immemorial. Today the Bodos are widely spread in Assam as well as in different places in India and even some neighbouring countries. Still today the Bodos remain as one of the living ethnicity and linguistic minorities within the Indian union and classified as one of the plains tribal of Assam. British regime chose to follow the

former defining the Bodo people as distinct groups within the Indian society. The policy was adopted for the Bodos during the colonial British India and they categorized as 'Schedule tribe' under Indian constitution. At present in the light of the history, the Bodo people continue to fight for their economic and political rights constituted under Indian constitutional provisions and through this arrangement of separate economic packages like BAC, BTC and BTR peace agreements have been signed between the India Central Government, Assam state Government along with the different Bodo leaders' organizations at different period of time.

The Bodos people have their own socio-cultural, religious and economic dimensions in the society. Bodo traditional society is an agrarian-society. The socio-structure of the Bodo is primarily patriarchal in character, where male the member is the sole authority in the family and naturally the hereditary property in the family passed to the male heirs. But it is found that the female members remain enjoyed the rights to own the hereditary assets. This system is still continuing in the Bodo society with great value and respect to the women as a whole. The little changes have been found regarding the distribution of property among the children at present time. The distribution of hereditary property is being served and shared amongst the children be it sons or daughters in the family. It is being found clear picture on the ongoing society. Agriculture played a significant role in the social life of the Bodos as there were many myths, beliefs and festivals in the Bodo society in relation to the nature of agricultural societies. They have their system of selecting land for sowing seeds, harvesting, etc. In the agricultural field they have certain ways of measuring the rain water for each month. Till at present it can be said that agriculture plays an important role in the Bodo society not only in the way of livelihood but also still having a great impact on the social life of the Bodos in the society. They still solely depend on the agricultural products even though the economic conditions have been quite improved.

In the religious dimension, traditionally, the Bodo people have their own beliefs and traditions since the ancient time. The Bodos were believed to be having both animistic and monotheistic aspects in their religious life as studied by different scholars. But the Bodo people neither worship idol nor have any worship place, their mind, imagination beliefs is to earth, air and sky. They worship a spiritual being

which is known as '*Bathou*', the supreme God. To them believing in the other gods and goddesses were also found with benevolent spirits and religion but not as much importance like *Bathou*.

In the cultural life of the Bodo people, they have their own traditional-customs and practices. It can be said that the Bodo people have rich cultural affinities unlike the tribal and non tribal societies in Assam. The Bodo society is still found in an agrarian character. Most of the cultural affinities are associated within the domain of cultivation and time seasons. The food habits also remain unique cultures having their own way of food rangers in the society. Among all the meat the Bodo people love pork meat as a favorite delicacy. Hunting and fishing are also two favorite time pass activities of the Bodo people which were found in the early period.

Agricultural is the mainstay of their family economic. Their activities within the culture and traditions are partly related to the agricultural life. The Bodos were the first to introduce the irrigations system in the North East India. When the American missionaries who worked among the Bodos in the early nineteenth century stated that the Bodos have been experts in the agricultural activities. Thus, Capt. Butler in his sketch of Assam described them as the best cultivator. They irrigate their land from the hills stream to such a great extent. The Bodo people cultivate mainly rice and along with that many other cash crops are also grown like mustard seed, cotton, different types of vegetables, sugar cane and different types of seasonal fruits, banana, jackfruit, mango, orange, lemon, etc. So traditionally the agriculture is the main source of economic of the Bodos which have remained since centuries.

In the society the Bodo women hold with specific roles in the social set up. They are constrained with many activities like child caring, looking after family, kitchen stuffs, washing clothes, cleaning the house surrounding, caring the health of the family members, looking after household chores and looking after various agriculture and allied activities while men are expected to go for hunting, house building, for arrangement of family major needs and for agriculture activities. It was known that the Bodo women attained high position and gained respect in the society in the early period and still now it is continuing who make maximum decisions and

shoulder more responsible in the family. It is also significantly true that in the Bodo society their position and value was never discarded and is preserved till recent time. The Bodo women remain as the equal performers in each and every social dimensional fraternity in the society with that of men. Their roles in the different social functions, social activities, community work and cultural activities have been reflected as having the main role and attained equal position in the society as part played by them. The identity of their appearance by dressing sense and dedication in the society also draw an amazing praiseworthy by others societies in Assam.

Bodo women played a significant role in the society. In the festive occasions the women prepared food and also processed different food items like meat, fish, beverage, vegetables etc. The Bodos have rich cultural and traditional festivals which are mostly seasonal like *Bwisagu* (Bihu in Assamese term) during the main festivals the celebration is added by drinks and merry making. Bodo women are busy in preparation of *Zumai* (rice beer) which they are expert in making of this favorite item. Many of them acted as midwives or nurses at the time of child birth even today where modern medical facilities are not so much available. Women do not lack behind every social function including the religious performances. Six types of marriages have been practiced in the Bodo society and some are arranged according to the situation of the girl's response in the family. There is no denying the fact that the Bodo girl who attained the age of puberty enjoys somewhat mere freedom compared to the girls of other societies. They have the right to inherit the parental properties when there is no male child in the family. They enjoy such properties even after marriage. The female folk entrusted the responsibility of looking after the household's chores, articles and maintenance of properties in the family. Their place in the society never discarded inside and outside family. Women in the society set an equal footing with that of male counterpart. The Bodo society remains full of festivals, amusement and enjoyment according to the time and season. In such a social function, they enjoyed equal participation to men and at the same time executed various performances. They enjoy liberty to participate in religious activities. It is furnished that the Bodo women both in early life and present day enjoyed a large measures of freedom in the society and served as a great significant role within the family as well as in the society.

In the Bodo society it is mentioned that there was no existence of caste system and the social division among them is traced according to the profession of work; this clan structure has essentially brought the traditional division of class in the ancient traditions. The rural village life was the common village structure in the society. In the earliest time the Bodo society have three houses namely *Nomano* which is divided into three parts like *Itching* (kitchen), *Okhrang* (dining hall) and *Khopra* (master bed room). Another second house is *Bakri* (granary) and the third house is *Chhwrano* (guest house).

Rice is the main staple food of the Bodos. One of the most favorite delicacies is pork meat. Another favorite diet is dry fish. The Bodo women are also known for their skill in preservation process of different items like dry fish. Among this, Napaam is one of the most popular items preserved for long time. Beside these the Bodo women prepared the traditional curry like *Ondla* (prepared with grinded rice powder), *Narzi* (dry jute leaves), *Sobai* curry (black dal) etc are some of the specific curries cooked by them. The Bodo women and their culture constitute an enchanting cultural peculiarity among the women in the different tribal societies in Assam. The Bodo women wear their traditional dress called *Dhokona*, which are weaved by them. Once it was known that the Bodo women were expert in weaving and mostly spent their time in the family with their loom and such activities are still found in the Bodo villages. Among the different clothes weaved by the Bodo women is *Eri* clothes prepared and yarned from the *Eri* silk which are reared and used by them for consumption as well as for productions of clothes and that have been continuing since the early time.

The Bodo people followed the traditional religion called *Bathou*, it is known as *Bwrai Bathou* which means old man. *Bathou* is considered as the supreme god among the Bodos. The meaning of *Bathou* indicates deep philosophical words, where 'Ba' means five elements and 'Thou' means deep rooted inside. Thus, *Bathou* signify five deep spiritual elements in beliefs. In the Bodo traditional religious festivals there are various festivals which are performed like *Kherai Puja*; this puja is observed twice a year. The main purpose of this puja is performed to have a good harvest of the crops since the Bodo socio- religious activities are purely dependent on the

agricultural activities. Bodo women play a significant role and perform as a *Doudini* during this puja. Here in this puja Bodo woman iconic importance in the religious ritual and prayer and performance in the religious activities is served. The religious activities of the Bodo women are commendable to mention that in each and every religious ritual and practice women have also the fore front space in the performance of the religious activities in the society.

One of the most popular traditional and cultural festivals is *Bwisagu* (Bihu in Assamese). It is one of the most celebrated festivals among the Bodos, perhaps even celebrated widely by the other caste people too. It is celebrated once in a year in the month of April. It is a seasons of joy and merry making to welcome the New Year. So, in this celebration the Bodo women have been using their abilities and talents to participate in various cultural functions in the society. The Bodo women play a key role in the family; the responsibility of the family in the Bodo society is vested with the women and they along with their husbands performed all the duties in the family. The major works in the family like raising children, cleaning, maintaining compound, looking after the domestic livestock, cooking, washing etc are basically discharged by them. The upper hand control of the family's materials mostly lies upon the mother in the family. In the socio-family life, the preparation of *Zou* (rice beer) and its importance is one of the significant duties that have been there since the early period. The skill and technique of the preparation of *Zou* passes from generation to generation by the Bodo women. The importance of rice beer is still felt significance in the Bodo society as it has been associated with some of the socio-religious required items during the chanting of religious rituals for which the women were considered as an important figure in the preparation. At present the use of rice beer in such socio-cultural festivals has become less importance because of the cultural transition and modernization where the assimilation to the different religions like *Brahma dharma*, Christianity are some of the causes.

In the socio-agricultural structure, the village society used the metaphor concept to defining the work culture in the Bodo society known as *Saori janai* (conducting *Saori*). It is a specific technical cooperation among the intensive labour process associated with the agricultural and other works. The Bodo women were not

behind when it came to taking part in *Saori* and there is no restriction saying on the matter of gender issues. *Saori* was performed for the maintenance of socio-economic and cultural life which fostered solidarity, cooperation and sense of collective identity of a certain community. Women actively participated in such a free willing work. Women are found involved in the various social works and they are encouraged to perform as equal responsibilities as men do.

The Bodos have six types of marriages in the society. These marriages have commonly been practiced since the early days but among this *Swngnan lainai haba* (arranged- marriage) is the most preferable marriage commonly arranged till the recent time. The wedding is mostly held with the prior concern of the girl. The reaching of girl's puberty is waited and no child marriage is significant in the society and the dowry system was also unknown. In the wedding ceremony the role of Bodo women as *Bwirathis* remain as an important requirement for performing of different activities in the ceremony right from the initial process of the marriage. The *Bwirathis* distributed and served the betel nuts, welcoming the bride's party during wedding time. They dressed with *Dhokona Thaosi* (new Dokhona). The *Bwirathis* makes fun, entertain and makes more colourful in the wedding. Their significant roles in the marriage system are felt necessity and important as the main key role person that plays during the wedding ceremony.

In the Bodo society in the early period, the system of bride price was also prevalent as mentioned by the different writers and the historians but such a tradition is not found following at present. The basic thing known from this tradition is that the Bodo women were having right to demand the price to the groom parents as per her convenience. The rate in *Phon Taka* (Bride price) was the rate collected by the bride's parent from the groom's family. The bride price was prevalent but was not much popular in practice. In this regard it clearly draws a conclusion that the value of bride was respected high in the society.

The Bodo women in the society also performed as the medicine women. Such medicinal practices have been continuing in the Bodo society since the ancient time. They basically performed like the piercing of ear, nose for wearing ornaments, as

midwife during the child birth. They treated the different sicknesses and evil spirit by traditional medicinal knowledge applied as an ointment to the affected area. It is still evident in the rural Bodo villages. The practicing of witch-hunting belief was also prevalent in the Bodo society. The Bodo women practiced as ojha in the village have also often been sometimes believed to be practicing the black magic like witch hunting and it is no doubt at present time considered as illegal and superstitious practiced but in earlier time very often such practices were found in the villages.

The basic economic sources are coming from the agricultural activities. The products have been profusely praised even by the Christian missionaries who worked among the Bodos during the colonial period. The Bodos traditional family society can also be seen in another way of economy accountability and the potentialities of rearing livestock remain as an important economy source to each and every family in the Bodo society. Besides that another substantial sources were also carried out by the Bodo women that was weaving and sericulture industries. At mention may be made that the Bodo women were expert in the weaving and the products of the *eri* silk clothes having a good market value even the outside country. In the Duars of Assam such products along the Indo-Bhutan border during the colonial period was the border trade activities were significant as per the historical source is concerned. The Bodo women in the family mainly initiated the economy proficiency in looking after the family health, children, household stuffs etc. They encountered with the economic responsible of the family and involved in the commercialization of the different means through agriculture, horticulture, animal husbandry, rearing of silk worms, preparation of Zou, weaving industries, vegetables etc. In the agricultural economic activities the Bodo women extensively involved right from the process of beginning of cultivating to till harvest. Many of the scholars and writers mentioned that the responsibility of the granary is even bestowed upon the women of the family. In the early period the women were responsible for the mills of the rice for entire feeding of the family. Besides these the Bodo women were also taking part in the fishing and hunting. Rev. Sydney Endle mentioned that the Bodo women even took the leading part in Fishing. The commercial sense of Bodo women were continued to grow wider in order to become economically independent in the family. The Bodo women used

different fishing tools known as *Zekhai*, *Pohlo* etc made from Bamboo; mostly the women fished in group and sometimes community fishing were also carried out. The dry fishes were having good markets in the border trade market in the Duars areas in the early period and are still at present markets as well. The silk worms rearing had been popularly habituated since the early period in the Bodo villages and served as one kind of favorite delicacy as well as for the production of *eri*-clothes. The sericulture activity remains as the significant economic activities that are basically carried out by the Bodo women at home. Therefore, such skill continually sustains as a good tool to carry out their economy profession through weaving. The weaving industry has been serving as the main income of the family till the recent time. The weaving industry was a simple structure installed or planted within the courtyard of the houses but now it is established as the big industrial work as privately as well as with the financial aids run by the public sector.

Right from the *Brahma Dharma* movement the idea of basic commercial activities began. The commercial activities continued to grow and rapidly changed the economic status of the Bodos in the post colonial period. The traditional economy on agricultural products was no longer a sufficient source in the human development in the fast changing global economy. Therefore, the trade and business of the recent trends had been looked into different alternate commercial activities in the society. The new concept of women empowerment becomes new strategy policy to empower all sections of the people specially the women. The unemployed women in the rural areas are trained with different public and non- public's programmes in the development of self sustainable economy in the society. This new policy was adopted by the different government agencies and NGOs to propagate the skill development, awareness program, business policy, entrepreneur activities among the women group and make them sustainable in the economic benefits in the family. The Bodo women played a significant result in this policy. The development and participation of women in different Self Help Groups and other small private programmes has extensively helpful in the bringing and financial management of different commercial means and policies to propagate the economy development of the society.

There has been considerable work in the religion and culture of the Bodos by different scholars and writers like Anil Boro, Bhaben Narzi, M. Choudhury, K Brahma, R.N. Moshahary, Magolsingh Hazoari, Sekhar Brahma on the religion of the Bodos. Since the early age, religion has played a significant role in the development of the socio-cultural and beliefs in the domain of Bodo women in the society. The *Brahma Dharma* has taken a place in the religious life of the Bodo people under the leadership of Gurudev Kalicharan. The introduction of the Brahma Dharma gets momentum in the social and religious reforms in the Bodo society. Gurudev kalicharan established schools for the Bodo people at Tipkai and also opened a lodge for the Tribal Bodo students in the Dhubri town and established schools like L.P and M.E schools during his time. The girls' education and weaving industry were encouraged by him. The girls were asked to go to schools. The Bodo women in the *Brahma Dharma* have not found much experience differences compared to the traditional religion. The role, contribution and their performance in the dharma remain significant in the religious society. The women continued to perform the religious activities and had the place for performance. The changes of religious activities were found in the *Dharma* but the women's role remains as it is, as that of the role enjoyed by them in their traditional religion.

Christianity came to Assam and to the Bodo society through the missionary activities. The 19th century witnessed the growth of Christianity not only in Assam but throughout the nation. The American Baptist Christian Mission established their mission station in Gauhati in the year 1843 AD by Nathan Brown and Rev. Oliver Kuttar. Later, the Missionary established the Mission school and the first Bodo who became Christian was Apintha Kachari in 1849 AD at Gauhati. Mr. Hessel Mayor who was Anglican missionary also established mission in 1860 AD at Tezpur. Rev Sydney Endle successfully established a mission station at Tezpur. He then established the Anglicans mission home in the Darrang district. So, in the Goalpara district the mission works were began by the Lutheran missionaries to evangelize the Santhali community. Through this mission in Goalpara the first Bodo named Taklo Boro became Christian. Also through this mission rapid increasing of missions and converting Christian religion has been seen sizeable numbers. Goalpara becomes a

centre for the mission work. Thus the Christian missionaries came into contact with the Bodo people and their culture, tradition, religions pertaining to the social customs, family life, marriage, and social practice in regards to bride price, festivals, and witchcraft has been changed through Christianization and promotion of education in the society. The Bodo women in the Christian society in the beginning of Christianity were having less role and position in the religious activities as compared to the traditional Bodo religion. The traditional preparation of Zou was totally discarded. The duties of women in the wedding ceremony were not much as important as that of traditional marriage. The major changes can be seen in the spheres of women's role and function in the marriage. But considering past, in the recent time the women's role is somehow improved and pertained to make a big contribution to the development and building of the Christian society. The constant changing of Christianization witnesses that the woman's role continued to grow higher and involved at entire decision making in the family, society and organizations.

Furthermore, the status and role of Bodo women in the Christian society gradually improved in achieving the position and designation in each and every Christian institute and church administration. The Christian Bodo women started looking after the local church administration, leading services, doing praise and worship, organizing different religious functions, chanting chorus, leading devotional ethics, holding portfolios in different Christian organization at different level of offices and organizations were some of the major places where the women are absorbed. The duties and participation are now significant right from the local church society to the top level administration and organization in the Christian society. Women are highly labelled as equal to men in the ministerial development and building of the greater Christian society. The role of the women remains same in the family duty like in the earlier period. But in the context of Christian social norms, perhaps the efforts and influence of the socio-religious agencies and the status of women in early post-colonial period was not that much satisfactory. At the recent context of new trends of Christianity, the Bodo Christian society turned more impressive development with more equality and fraternity towards the Bodo women. In the Christian Dharma, the position and role of the women have slightly changed in

various aspects. It is mentioned that the activities and role of Bodo women in the marriage system is not fully changed. The responsibility of the women remains same but the ritual, place of marriage, dress sense and humour of marriage is now in a different way. Among the Christian marriage the process of marriage in the pre-marriage and the post marriage is also little change. During the wedding time when the bride and groom are taken for marriage in the church, all the functions and rituals are performed by the Pastor/Reverend/ Father/ Church Priest. The role of women remains the same with slight changes. The woman in the Christian faith shows now coming to an important place in the local or within the organization holding various position and in the smooth functioning of the church administration and the local bodies. The women are now particularly looking after the church society, family, association, community centre, missionary's activities; educational centre, charities, women committee, prayer cell etc are some of the Christian churches activities especially where the women are also involved in the recent time. The Bodo women play a significant part and role in the religious life of the Bodo people. The responsibility of the family in the society is vested upon women. In the religious spheres the Bodo women hold forefront responsibility while performing the religious activities.

In the traditional *Bathou* religion the Bodo women always maintained the *Bathou* Altar clean and daily morning and evening she offered a prayer and also prays to the goddess *Mainao* who is considered the god of wealth or the rice. The Bodo society is also having different kind of festivals and pujas like in *Kherai* puja; the Bodo women's performance is the most significant. In this puja the women act as *Doudini* and perform the puja's ritual along with the *Douri* and chant the ritual. In this puja the women cannot be replaced by men. The *Doudini* becomes the mediator between the god (spirit) and the worshippers. The *Doudini* demonstrate her rituals activities and perform dances in three stages, the first is *Alongkangnai*, in the second she becomes unconsciousness and acted like mad women and in third stage she started jumping, jerking and her whole body would be like shivering and shaking and in this puja the *Doudini* performs different types of dances related to the socio-cultural and religious life of the Bodos which is still prevalent in the Bodo society. In

Garja Bodo the women assemble in the *Garjashali* are significant but it is the main duty of the women folks to keep ready of the different equipments and tools for the preparation of the garja puja and supply all the necessary items require during the ritual performance. Besides these all the religious ritual performances in the different socio-religious festivals, occasion and the religious activities are part played by the women in the traditional religion by the Bodo women.

The festival like *Bwisagu* celebration among the Bodo society is also colourful one. *Bwisagu* is basically celebrated in order to welcome the New Year which is celebrated in the first week in the month of April. The women in *Bwisagu* celebration are so busy in preparing the *Zou* (rice beer) before the *Bwisagu* cooked different food items and celebrate with a colourful dances and enjoying *oma khaji* and *zou* is the main characters seen during the *Bwisagu*. The women and young ones pray to god for their safety from the unseen evils and wish to lead a good life throughout year. The women remain important persons in each and every celebration of the different social festive in the society. It is followed by *Domashi* another festival during the time of harvest. It is the festival to enjoy the different food items prepared during the new harvesting time. In these festivals generally the Bodo women prepared different food items which is the special characters of this celebration. The preparation of *Zou* and others food items are make ready in this occasion by the women. The Bodo women are also having a dignity while performing the *Kathi Gasa Saonai* a kind of festival where who lights the *Kathi* in the paddy filed in the pre-harvest period of the paddy crops. The women of the family go to the field with *sewari* and lighted the *Kathi*. So, by doing this it is believed that the paddy field will have a good harvest bountifully. The Bodo women in *Neosa garnai* and *bibar mala gannai* festival also have some role in the festival, in *Neosa Garnai* festival in the last phase of ritual women are restricted to participate; they carried out all the formal work in the puja and when the puja is over after throwing the *Neosa* in the river and in the next day they will have a grand feast and during that day the village headmen's wife announces about the next day that there will be a another program which is called the *aijwfwrni bibar mala ganani fwrbw* (garland ceremony. So, the next day all the women of the village gathered in the house of Headmen. Therefore all the women collect different flower from the

home as well as from the jungles and mend it together and collect their ornaments also and the headmen's wife recite the ritual and seated together in a row and put the garland to each other which is known as women's flower garland ceremony. The Bodo women in the *Brahma Dharma* also play significantly by helping the societies to change into a clean society, by organizing the participation in the propagation of the *Dharma* by uplifting the women issues in the family and the women organization and committees have so far been demanded various rights and privileges of the women in the society. Other than these the Bodo people are also at present assimilated to different other Hindu cultures and faiths, continually taking place in the Bodo society. In this the Bodo women are mostly found attending different religious pujas like , diwali, kali puja, dushheera, Durga puja, Chaut puja, etc. Bodo women are fully involved and participated in performing the pujas and offered prayers. It is cleared that the Bodo women are fully associated with such pujas and functions of the other Hindu faiths besides following their own traditional religion as well.

No doubt, the *Bathou* is the main traditional religion of the Bodos through which many agricultural, seasonal festivals and cultural practices are linked. There is no denying the fact that the Bodo women played a significant role in the religious activities since the ancient days. The recent understanding has been offered wider scopes with having more opportunities that are drifted to the women to serve the society by religious participation. Therefore, it is felt that in order to bring equal development in the society equal participation of women is utmost necessary. In such an instance, even gender barrier has no space to play. Thus, Bodo women in the society have more freedom of holding their own way of responsibility by playing a significant role, particularly in the religious activities. And therefore, their participation counts better society. At last, one may understand that Bodo women attain deserving positions in the religious society, irrespective of the religion that they followed and cultures within the Bodo society.

The conditions of the Bodo people in the colonial period remained as dormant in the traditional system and beliefs and there was no any sign of political consciousness. The political consciousness began when the socio-religious reformation carried out in the Bodo society during the *Brahma Dharma* movement.

The forming of *Bodo Chhatra Sanmilan* (Bodo Student Association) at Dhubri in 1919 was the student body that was started addressing the different issues of the Bodos. This was under the undivided district of Goalpara Assam and the main objectives of this organization to see the various general improvements say like in language, social issues, culture, political and the economic related issues for the Bodo youths. The young educated youths of that time emerged and in 1936 onwards these educated youths like Rupnath Brahma, Bhimbor Deuri and Satish Chandra Basumatary founded the Tribal League which became first socio-political organization of the Bodos and through this organization most of the Bodos issues concerning to the socio- political and education issues are being deal with.

The foundation of the Bodo Sahitya Sabha or the Bodo Literary Association was one of the most significant developments in the history of the Bodos. This Literary Society came into existence in the year 1952 with an objective to avow the development in the literary works in the Boro language. This organization also vowed to take up all the issues in the educational decision as well in the Boro language and create more development in the literary works in Boro. The organization continues to organize different workshop, Seminar, conference, meetings and public gathering to encourage the writings skills and literary works. And from time to time through this organization different literary works/books are used to publish. This is how the literary works in the Bodo Medium School was also established with the initiative of this and the student organization and the gift of education in the Bodo society has to be praised because of the western Christian missionaries who have opened the eyes of the Bodos. This organization and its literary works have paved the way for the new door to education and also helped in the different socio-economic and political gear of the Bodo women in the society. These works were later added in the Bodo literature and published and used it in the Schools which tremendously encouraged to work for the common people. Earlier this type tales were not in a written form but due to the recognition of language through the Bodo Sahitya Sabha. After the recognition of language as an associate language in the state of Assam and sixth schedule recognition have brought major changes in the development of education in the vernacular language which encouraged the women to fights for their rights in every

aspect. In the words of Anil Boro, the contribution of the missionaries in the development of the Bodo language and literature can never be over emphasized; but the literature they produced cannot be called Bodo literature proper. Bodo literature proper came into being only in the twentieth century with the publications of the *Bibar*, the first Bodo magazines published in 1924 as the mouth piece of the Bodo Chhtra Sanmilan. Late Satish Chandra Basumatary was the editor of the magazine. Others poets and authors associated with the *Bibar* were late Padmashri Madaram Brahma, Sobharam Brahma Choudhury, Dwarendra Basumatary. Alongbar and other Bodo magazines were published in 1938 with late Promod Chandra Brahma as the chief editor. Poets and authors who contributed to the Magazines were Promod Chandra Barhma, Ishan Mushahari, Kalikumar Lahiry, Mohini Mohan Brahma and many others, mostly songs, poems and plays with nationalism and patriotic fervor were written during the first literary Renaissance of Bodo Literature and culture. The women got inspiration from them in the various literary activities and continued to extend their supreme sacrifices in the development of the society in a most rightful way.

The *Brahma Dharma* movement encouraged the girl's education along with the different eradication of social customs and practices, and also helped the Bodo women to live in a particular way of clean society in the family. Through this movement the notable contribution is towards the women development in terms of social and educational ways. Through this various steps and welfare the need for women education among the Bodo women is also necessarily felt among the women leaders. This *Mahila Samitis* was also advocated the female education and encourage all the women to send their daughters and granddaughters to school. So, the revolution of women education was started significantly during the time and after the influence by the *Brahma Dharma*. Mention has to be made that during that time the weaving industries was also highly oriented and various weaving centre were established in order to have economically self independent among the women in the Bodo society; many traditional economy activities are also been reformed and turned into commercial perspective. With the permission of the Deputy Commissioner A.J Laine, Kalicharan Brahma in 1912 established the M.E school, weaving and

Carpentry Vocational institutes at Tipkai. These weaving schools are being enrolled by the Bodo women along with providing education to them. The Bodo girls facilitated the education and became skilled among the earliest female students among the Bodos in Goalpara. And some of the girl students were Nalini Brahma Daughter of Kalicharan Brahma, Shikribala Daughter of Birnarayan Brahma, Nolesvari Brahma daughter of Chaburam Brahma and Rupeswari Brahma, sister of Kalicharan Brahma Junior. The primary and the M.E school were also established in the different places to promote the women education in the Bodo society. Kalicharan Brahma (Junior) was the head master at the weaving centre and also for the carpentry works. Education of women has got immense importance for the upliftment of their social set up. Education is an essential factor in achieving the economic development, individual development, creating the social order of values which is experienced in the sense of freedom, social justice and equality in the society that finally brought political attention towards the Bodo women.

The Bodo women in political participation through the movement in the field of social, Cultural, Religion and political history can be seen from the time when Neo *Vaisnavism*, *Moamaria* Rebellion, Dhubri Match Box Company strike in 1928, Digboi Oil Company in 1939, Sharecroppers in 1950, Brahma Movement, Missionaries Movement, Tribal League movement in 1933, RCP movement, Bodo sahitya Sabha in 1952 etc were some of the series of movements in Assam where the Bodo women were involved partially which was not much significant as much as record and data has not been found relevant documentation on such issue. But the mass participation of the Bodo women in the political field is found in the different movements' right from the Roman Script movement in 1974-75 to till Bodoland movement led by ABSU. The language script was very necessary to introduce the Bodo medium schools in the Bodo dominated area. Thus, the Roman script was temporarily accepted as the Bodo Script at the 15th Annual conference of BSS held in Khelmari, near Tezpur on 22nd April 1974. Thus, the series of movements have influenced the women folk as well to join the movement and participate in the political.

The participation of women in politics can be observed in two perspectives: one by considering their involvement in the different phases of movement while the other is to direct participation in the constitutional right by exercising their voting rights and the democratic provisions. During the ABSU movement another branch worked as an underground wing which is known as Bodo Volunteers Force (BVF). In 1989 ABSU and BVF leaders trained the women to use firearms and given basic training how to fire rifle, Pistols etc. and also trained to carry message and Article from one place to another. Different mobilize group were also arranged and placed in different areas which were basically taken initiative by the AATWWF. In the mobilization of the ABSU movement AATWWF members played a significant role. It is mention it was the movement of middle class people, as maximum members and leaders of- BSS, ABSU,PTCA, PTCA (P) and UTNLF belonged to the educated families who were working as teachers, Doctors, Lawyers, Artist, Naval officers, school, college and government employees etc. Women from all category join in the ABSU's call and participated in different Processions- *Dharnas, gheraos, rasta roko*, rail ways and National Highway blocked, protest movement, human chain movement, bandhs, cycle rally, mass gathering, etc where mass participating of women were found. All Bodo Women Welfare Federation (ABWWF) plays a significant role as organizational role in the Bodo society. Earlier its activities were seen mostly helping and involving in the Bodoland movement and besides this bringing awareness to Bodo women in the field of socio-economic, civil procedure and worked for all round development in the society. The Bodo women Justice Forum was also another women organization which has been dealing with the different crimes against the women in the society. The Bodoland movement becomes one of the pioneer phases where the period from 1986 to 1993 was the most critical and mass gathering hartal for Bodoland movement was severely continuing. The Bodo women were seen significantly taking part in the movement and even joining in some of the underground militant revolutionary groups like NDFB and fight against the rights and atrocities for the cause of the separate political rights of the Bodo people. Therefore, the political consciousness amongst the Bodo women has its inception since from the different period of phase of movement in the history of the Bodoland Movement.

Thus, after the study it shows that the major findings can be summarized in the following conclusion. The nature and characteristic of the Bodo society though patriarchal, the Bodo women play a significant role and attain good position in the socio-cultural, socio-economic, religious and in the political aspect. Further it is to be mentioned that in the traditional Bodo society the status, role and rights of the women in the society varies from person to person. The women's status and role in the social structure is really a significant specially in looking after family, building social structure, involvement in the various social functions, social norms and affinities. The social responsibility is partly maintained incomplete without the women's contribution in the Bodo society. In the economic aspects, the Bodo women play a significant contribution in the society; the women take the burden of the whole family responsibilities and alongside play major economic contribution in the family economy. They involve themselves in various domestic means to make income in the family. It is found out that the Bodo women have been playing an important role since the ancient time in the social life of the Bodos. The women's involvement in various socio-cultural statuses shows the higher status of women in Bodo society compared to other tribal societies in Assam. The Bodo women continue to hold equal position and enjoy various rights and perform equal responsibilities in each and every matter of social life. However, some few examples of denying their privileges in the social life are also found.

The Bodo women have been significantly contributing in the growth and development of the Bodo society. They are highly valued, enjoyed equality of rights and take part in the decision making of the family. There has been some social imbalance system in the traditional property rights and other means of social norms but they have never suffered suppression and oppression in the society. It is clearly noticed that half of the contribution of the economic probability in the society flowed from the women activities. They continue to perform as economic resources without affecting normal duty as mother, daughter, daughter-in-law, wife, or mother-in-law. The Bodo women are significantly found hardworking, energetic, kind hearted, dedicated and sincere in their work in the economic activities. It can be rightly said that the economic that the Bodo women contribution in the society is an

immeasurable. Thus far at the same time they enjoy equal rights over economic proficiency in the uses of different economic resources at their own will without the requirement of taking permission from the head of the family/ male head.

In the religious activities the Bodo women also play an important part; they are not restricted in performing different religious rituals or from the restriction entry to the religious institutions. In most of the religious functions and religious gatherings they are part of the activities and ritual performances. The Bodo women are found associated with the performance of different religious pujas, prayers, worshipping and attending various religious gathering. Women activities towards religious performances to some extent remain same in the post colonial period. It is found that Bodo women have extensive role in the religious performance. In the *Brahma Dharma* the women are given free hand to perform in the exercising of the religious rituals. In Christianity it is found that the women position becomes an important figure in the entire religious activities. It is also found that some traditional religions are not continuing, but women still remain active in the religious performance in the existing traditional religion as well to other Hindu sects practiced in the Bodo religious society.

However, the women who were educated and become conscious about their rights and privileges in the society as well as in the policy making of the government and political system, that they began to look for an opportunity which were not once aware of their rights in the early period due to the absent of educational and political consciousness. Therefore, in later days, the constant development and the mobility of the society in the different aspects of life in the socio-economic awareness, the development in the political aspect now draw a new attention on the condition of women section to grow and look forward to involve themselves in the different political movement and be a part in the policy making in the various administrative areas, in the administrative area in the society, in the public governance and also in the political genre as well.

It is found that the role and participation by the Bodo women in the different movement have witnessed the political consciousness. Participation in the Bodoland

movement has birth women's wing organizations. The women were found as a major part of the movement but the role they played in election was very rare. The major political consciousness among the Bodo women basically started from the phase of Bodoland movement led by ABSU and thereafter emerged different women organizations through which the self political consciousness to every Bodo played a major role in each and every phase of the Bodo issues through the later days as well.

Therefore, the Bodo women have been playing an important role in the socio-economic, religious and political aspects. The study has found that the patriarchal in nature of the society has no barrier rather it has given more or less equal respect to that of men. Women's involvement in various socio-cultural positions shows the higher status of women in Bodo society unlike other tribal societies in Assam. The women have enjoyed the same status and privileges with that of the male counterpart since the early period till at present. It was the pertinent issue that status and role of the Bodo women were being restricted at different phases due to the external influences. But it is clearly indicated from the study that their position and role in the society have remained at respectable and deserving positions even in the present day changing state of society.