

CHAPTER-I

INTRODUCTION

THE BODOS AND THE MISINGS OF ASSAM AND THEIR CULTURE- A HISTORICAL APPROACH

The Bodo and the Mising are two Mongoloid tribes living in the plain area of Assam and in the north bank of the river Brahmaputra in particular. The Bodo being the largest and the latter-one is the second in terms of population among the plain tribes of Assam, are influential tribal groups in the culture, economy, politics and the over-all lifeline of the Brahmaputra valley and Assamese formation as a whole. Mentionable that although these tribal groups asserted themselves Assamese erstwhile, gradually began to consider themselves to be separate ethnic groups from Assamese. In this context, it seems that the Bodo has been striving to establish its separate distinct Bodo identity while the Mising has come forward for unification of its people and revival of cultural elements with an objective to march ahead with the equal partaking of all the ethnic groups in the greater Assamese formation.

The concept of the cultural revival of the Bodos that propagated in the first half of the twentieth century got a form of organized movement in the second half of that century to establish socio-cultural and political identity and thus politicization of ethno-cultural

identity started to come about. And it is notable as well, to see the role of cultural revival that developed among the Mising people to secure their political, economic and cultural rights with an equal sharing in greater Assamese formation.

Cultural identification all over the globe has been in the rise. People now want freedom to practice their religion, speak their language, and celebrate their ethnic, religious, traditional heritage without fear of ridicule. It has been suspected that dominant cultural groups would surely engulf all smaller ethnic existence and their identity. This suspicion and fear has consequently given rise to many of the ethnic movements today. This suspicion and fear and the trend of cultural identification is bound to be there in North-East India and it is likely to proliferate. Further different tribal communities of North-East India have started different movements and have mobilized their people to achieve greater socio-political and territorial autonomy. In Assam this phenomenon has become significantly visible in the 70's and 80's, and the number of groups mobilizing since then has been increasing.

One of the mostly noticeable features of Indian societal system is cultural pluralism. However, although this cultural pluralism is much enchanting in one hand, yet on the other, it has been being a main factor behind social and cultural conflict many a time and affecting the public life in multifarious ways. It is noticed that sometimes the factor ethno-cultural assertion has posed itself as a question mark to the nation-building process of India in its post-Independence era.

It is in this complex mosaic of different nationalities at different stages of socio-economic and political growth that Indian nation state is today facing some of the gravest challenges, with the entire process of nation building being questioned. It is here that the centralized authority of the Indian state is being repeatedly questioned, issues based on uneven development of the socio economic order raised and the idea of mainstream redefined. Time and again, the Indian nation state has had to work out new strategies and adjustment to deal with the issues raised by different autonomist¹. It implies that different movements of ethnic self-assertions embedded in caste, tribe, community grew in the post-Independence era have become indispensable matter of Indian society and polity. In the other sense, the concept of ethnic self assertion grown on the base of culture, caste, tribe, community etc has designed the nature of society and politics of many regions of India. North-East India, the land of ethnic and cultural pluralism, is the most vivid example of this development. Cultural plurality is one of the basic features of North-East India. While enjoying the colourful social life the people of this region are also experiencing the adverse affects of this pluralism due to the appearance of ethnic oriented discords in its society, politics, administration and so on.

Assam is the tract where the indo-mongoloid elements are present in their largest numbers in India. In Assam they dominated the scene, politically mostly and to some extent culturally also (although in the matter of culture including religion, the composite culture of the Ganges valley has always outward victory). With an exception numbers of a few of higher castes from the west (and these are as much mixed Austric Dravidian-Aryan

as any), most of the people are Indo-mongoloid, with some Austric and Dravidian stratum². Assam is one another prominent states of India which has faced this problem caused by cultural plurality. The state of Assam is a complex mosaic of different ethnic groups, with some shared ethnic characteristics in terms of historical memories, distinct cultural features, beliefs, languages or dialects. Their population strength is however small in comparison to that of the dominant majority Assamese speaking group. Being solidified by assimilation of different castes, tribes, communities, culture, the process of greater Assamese formation in the north-eastern state of India which is enriched with also different language and dialects had to face some questions in the second half of the twentieth century. Raising some fundamental questions to the process of greater Assamese formation, the Bodo emerged as a different group and initiated a movement in order to protect its cultural, economic and political right. With a view to realize its objectives, the Bodo revived its cultural symbols to unite its fraternity. Like so and in the same line, the Mising also thought to revive and restore its heritage and cultural elements. Now by this research, we intend to address the main causes behind the Bodo and the Mising movements and to see how the people have been organized by the revival of cultural symbols.

The Bodos and their culture

The Bodos are the autochthonous tribal group³, inhabiting the plains of the state of Assam. Among the tribal groups inhabiting the plains of Assam, the Bodo constitutes the largest group, their population mostly concentrated on the north bank of the river

Brahmaputra, with scattered population in many other parts of the state (Table.1.b). According to the Census Report of 2011, the Bodos having population of 1,361,735 (table 1.a) constitute the largest plain tribe of Assam⁴. One of the earliest reference to the term Bodo (Boro,Bada,Bara) is found in available in Sydney Endle's⁵ Ethnography. The generic word Bodo was first used by Hodgson and then by G.A. Greison⁶. At present the Bodos are pre-dominantly concentrated in the region between in the hilly tracks of Bhutan in north and the river Brahmaputra in the south. The region is now a politico-administrative unit called Bodoland Territorial Area Districts (BTAD) within the state of Assam.

Table 1.a

Total Bodo and Mising population in Assam

Name	Total Population 2001	Proportion to the total population of Assam 2001	Total Population 2011	Proportion to the total population of Assam 2011
Assam Population	26,655,528	100	31,205,576	100
All Scheduled Tribes	3,308,570	12.41	3,884,371	12.44
Bodo	1,352,771	5.07	1,361,735	4.36
Mising	587,310	2.20	6,80,424	2.18

Source: Census of India 2001 and 2011

Table: 1 .b

Pattern of Geographical Settlement of the Bodos in Selected Districts of Assam

District	Total Population	Total ST Population	Total Boro Kachari population	Percentage of total ST population	Percentage of Boro Kachari on total population
Baksa	9500,75	331,007	228,397	34.84	24.03
Kokrajhar	887,142	278,665	225,041	31.41	25.36
Goalpara	100,8183	231,570	41,224	22.96	4.08
Bongaingaon	738,804	188,35	7,315	2.54	0.99
Darrang	928,500	8419	4580	0.90	0.49
Chirang	482162	178,688	167,888	37.05	34.81
Nalbari	771,639	23,364	14,178	3.02	1.83
Barpeta	169,3622	27,344	25,311	1.61	1.49
Udalguri	831,668	267,372	218,581	32.14	26.28
Dhubri	194,9258	6,332	1,203	0.32	0.06

Source: Census of India 2011

The Bodos belong to the Indo-mongoloid stock or Indo-Tibetans. Regarding the racial features of the Bodos Mathias Hermanns commented:

As is the case with the Mache (rrtech) so also with the Kachari (Boro) the Mongoloid features are very prominent: the strong cheek bones, slit eyes, a slight growth of hair on the body and scanty beard. They are shorter and more stocky than the Indians of the north-east.⁷

Regarding their Mongoloid origin Sydney Endle remarked about the Kacharis that ⁸

“In face and figure they show a distinct approximation to what is known as Mongolian type,i.e., they have square set faces, projecting cheek-bones, with almond shape eyes, and scanty beard and moustache, the last mentioned being often wanting altogether”.

According to S.K Chatterjee the use of term Indo-Mongoloid to the Kiratas is significant in so far as the term “defines at once their Indian connection and their place within the cultural milieu in which they found themselves, as well as their original racial affinity.”⁹ Chatterjee writes¹⁰

The Bodos who spread over the whole of the Brahmaputra Valley and North Bengal as well as East Bengal, forming a solid block in North Eastern India, were the most important Indo-Mongoloid people in Eastern India, and they form one of the main basis of the present-day population of these tracts.

The contact of the Indo-Mongoloid with the Negroits, the Austro-Asiatic, the Nordic and Mediterranean races of India in different stages of history and civilization, Chatterjee identified as cultural assimilation and racial fusion. Chatterjee observes

Cultural assimilation went hand in hand with a large amount of racial fusion, people of the above mentioned races with various of Austric, Dravidian and Aryan speech (as well as Sino-Tibetan speech in Himalayan and North Eastern India) intermarrying with each other.¹¹

Kachari is a much more widely distributed race spread over not only inside Assam, undoubtedly found well outside Assam. E Gait is of the view that the Kacharis are identical with the people called Mech in Goalpara and North Bengal, in the Brahmaputra Valley they were known as Bodo and in North Cachar Hills Dimasa.¹² While viewing the wide spread Kachari race Sydney Endle said that in Eastern Assam a branch of Kachari race known as Chutiyas had a kingdom for a long time. One another branch of this wide spread race was known as Koch and they had once a powerful kingdom of Kamrupa in the western part of Assam. It is known that the Kacharis had their kingdom in Dimapur till the Ahoms captured it and the Kachari Raja thereupon removed his court to Maibong where they maintained it for nearly two centuries. Finally when it was attacked by the Jaintia King the Kachari Raja withdrew from Maibong to Khaspur in Cachar.¹³ Considering the variety of the Kachari race and its wide spread settlement Endle roughly categorized it into two categories, being taken Brahmaputra as the dividing line a) Northern Group 2) Southern Group.¹⁴

Scholars are of the view that the Bodos have in different stages of history been instrumental in exercising royal power. This section of scholar is instrumental in using the term Kachari identically with Bodo or as Bodo-Kacharis. So P.C Bhattacharya wrote “*the Boro people including their eastern and western branch had royal glories ...the western section of the old Boros (Kacharis) occupied the thrones of Koch-Bihar, Bijni, Darrang and Beltola*”.¹⁵ Dr. Anil Boro commented in this regard that the Bodos were in royal power in different epoch of history.¹⁶ In this context they further referred to the Kirata¹⁷ Rule in the Himalayan region, particularly in the eastern Himalayas, mentioned in Mahabharata, i.e., in Mahabharata the Kiratas were dwellers in the Himalayan region, particularly in the eastern Himalayas. Bhima in his conquering tour meets the Kiratas in the east after living the Videha Country.

British anthropologist Sydney Endle used the exonym Kachari (Bada) to identify numerous tribes that are considered descendants of this group of autochthonous tribe of Assam. Endle and Gait in their valuable work pointed out that the Kachari (Bada) is a greater race, settled wide spread all over Assam, even beyond modern Assam i.e. in North East Bengal, Coch-Bihar and also in Tripura. And the Kacharis, much widely distributed race as a whole, had their kingdom in different stages of history. In this context the Chutiya Kingdom in the eastern part of Assam, the Koch kingdom of Kamrupa, Kachari rule in Dimapur, Maibong and Khaspur are instrumental. Further they are of the view that¹⁸

The Kacharis are believed to be very closely allied to the Koches, and also so far at least as language is concerned, to the Chutiyas, Lalungs and Morans of the Brahmaputra Valley, and to the Garos and Tipperas of the southern hills. Having regard to their distribution and to the extent of the country over which Bodo language of a very uniform type are still current, it seems not improbable that at one time the major part of Assam and North Bengal formed a great Bodo Kingdom, and that some at least of the Mlecha Kings mentioned in some of the old copper plate inscriptions belonged to Kachari or some closely allied tribe.

The medieval Assam history also provides enormous evidence of Kachari Rule in different parts of Assam.¹⁹

Authors like K. Brahma uses the term Bodo in specific sense. He pointed out that “the Bodos are race of the Mongolian people who are described to be the inhabitant of a country north of the Himalayas and west of China. This land is known as Bod.”²⁰ How far the term Bod is connected to Boro or Bodo is only a matter of speculation. However the Linguistic Survey of India makes it clear that the term Bodo in the sense of generic name was first applied by Hodgson. Hodgson applied the generic name Bodo to the Sino-Tibetan languages.²¹ Grieson called them Bara, Bodo and plain Kacharis after Endle’s grammar²² as mentioned earlier.

Origin, Migration and Settlement

Researchers and scholars have been in continuous attempt to trace the origin of the Bodos. While discussing the origin of the Kacharis Sydney Endle rightly pointed out that *“the origin of the Kachari race is still very largely a matter of conjecture and inference, in the absence of anything entitled to be regarded as authentic history”*. However based on their physical features and general appearance he comments Tibet and China as their original homeland.²³

According to S.K Chatterjee the North Western China is the original homeland of the Mongoloid tribes. He pointed out that *“the area of characterization for the primitive Sino-Tibetan speech appears to have been North Western China between the head waters of Huang Ho and the Yang Tsze Krang Rivers”*. Here Sydney Endle points out to a folk belief of the Garos, *a race obviously near of kin to the Kacharis that their ancestors came down from the Northern Mountains.*²⁴ From the above discussion there can be a speculation that China and Tibet seem to be the original homeland of Bodos and all other Mongoloid races.

About the migration and settlement of the Kirat S.K. Chatterjee writes²⁵

When Mahabharata and Ramayana Taking shape, between 500 B.C to 400 A.D., particularly in the pre- Christian centuries, they had occupied the southern tracts of the Himalayas and the whole of North Eastern India, North Bihar contiguous to Nepal and to the North of Ganges, the greater part of Bengal and Assam

including the areas through which the Ganges passed into sea. Eastern Nepal and Lauhitya or the Brahmaputra valley were the lands specially connected with them.

After their settlement they became known as *Kirata*, a term used for the Non-Aryan origin by the Aryans as discussed earlier. Regarding the migration of the Bodo - Kacharis Endle pointed out that possibly there were at least two great immigrations from the North and North East to the valley of the Brahmaputra, one entered North East Bengal and Western Assam through the valley of Tista, Dharla, Sonkosh and founded the the kingdom of Kamrupa and the other made their way through the Subansiri, Dibong and Dihong valleys into the Eastern Assam, where a branch of wide spread Kachari race known as Chutiyas undoubtedly ruled for a long period.²⁶ According to S.K. Chatterjee the Mongoloid tribes came down to the South-China and Burma and thereby to North and North Eastern India basically in the early part of the first millennium B.C. He says that the Tibeto-Burman speakers somehow formed an area of dispersion somewhere in west and north of Tibet wherefrom they descended East and South. The ancestors of Tibeto-Burman migrated to India either through the Southern slopes of Himalayas or through Assam or by way of Tibet. Chatterjee writes

The Mongolian tribes from western china speaking forms of Sino-Tibetan speech appear to have been pushing south and west from their original homeland from pre-historic times, but certain large scale

movements of which we have faint inklings seem to have begun in the early part of first millennium B.C.²⁷

Though the exact location of the Bodo genesis still a matter of speculation and inference, above discussion and historical chronicles suggest that the Bodo-Kacharis moved periodically over a considerable amount of time from south China via Tibet and Bhutan in ancient times, and settled in the Himalayan plains below the foot hills of Bhutan and present Arunachal Pradesh, areas located at the Northern bank of river Brahmaputra. Gradually they moved further inland and settled in different parts of the region in and around the area adjoining Nepal, North Bengal, Garo Hills, North Cachar Hills and Cachar plains in the southern part of Assam, Tripura and some adjacent areas of Bangladesh. Accordingly Endle categorized the Bodo-Kacharis in to Northern and Southern group as mentioned above. In present day the people from Bodo-Kachari race who identify themselves as Bodo, are mostly concentrated on the north bank of the river Brahmaputra, with having scattered population in many other parts of the state. Presently the Bodos are pre-dominantly concentrated in the region between in the hilly tracks of Bhutan in north and the river Brahmaputra in the south.

Language of the Bodos

Language of the Bodos belongs to the Bodo group of Sino-Tibetan family of languages. Linguistically the Sino-Tibetan family of languages has been classified into two branches²⁸ -a) Tibeto Burman and b) Siamese Chinese. The former includes 1)

Tibetan and its varied dialects 2) the Himalayan group of dialects spoken in Nepal and Sikkim etc. 3) Pronominalised Himalayan dialects like Dhimal Thai Limbu etc.4) North Assam group of Tibeto-Burman Speech like Aka, Miri, Dafla and Mishimi 5) the Assam Burmese group including Bodo Speeches-Bodo, Mech, Rabha, Garo, Kachari etc. The Linguistic Survey of India Describes the Boro or the Boro-Kachari as a member of the Bodo sub section under the Assam-Buma group of the Tibeto-Burman branch of the Sino-Tibeto-Chinese speech family.

Endle is of the view that the Language of the Bodo people²⁹ “*at least as spoken in Darrang district belongs to the Agglutinative as distinct from the inflexional family of languages*”. The language, however, does not preserve any written record of the past, indicates that it had no written tradition in the past and it remained confine only in spoken form. The Bodo language did not have any written literature till the recent past. The Christian missionaries who entered the Bodo inhabited areas with a view in spreading Christianity published some books on religion, tales, rhymes and songs and started a written tradition. Among the books the translation of the Bible into Bodo language is worth mentionable. Collection of the Bodo Kachari tales and Rhymes by J.D. Anderson is also important. The first grammar written on Boro Language is “*Outline Grammar of the Kachari (Bara) Language*” (1884) written in English with Boro specimens by Sydney Endle, the author of the monograph on Bodos “*The Kacharis*” (1911). “*Outline of the Tibeto-Burman Linguistic Morphology*” (1929) written by S.N Wolfenden’s, H. Halvorsrud’s “*Boro Grammar*” (1959) are another grammars on Boro Language. In this

context the doctoral thesis of Dr. Promod Chandra Bhattacharya “*Descriptive Analysis of the Boro Language*” published in 1977 is worth mentionable.

Though it is seen that the written tradition in Bodo Language and literature was started by the Christian Missionaries yet the proper development of the Bodo language and literature began in 2nd decade of 20th century with the Publication of the *Bibar*³⁰, the first Bodo magazine. It was followed by publication of another magazine *Alongbar*³¹ and the Bodo novel *Juzaini*³².

Formation of Bodo Sahitya Sabha marked a mile stone in the development of the Bodo language and literature. In the aftermath of socio-political awakening and formation of organization like Bodo Sahitya Sabha³³ (BSS), All Bodo Students Union³⁴ (ABSU) and the movement launched by it, Bodo language was introduced as a medium of instruction in 1963 in the Bodo dominated areas of Assam. Presently the language has been recognized as the associate language of Assam. The language got another position with the opening of post graduate course in Bodo language in Gauhati University in 1996, and later in Dibrugarh University as well. Further, the language attained the position of pride when it was included in the eight Scheduled of Indian Constitution in 2003. In the initial period though there was a confusion regarding the use of the Script whether it would be Devanagri or Roman and a movement for Roman Script for Bodo language has been launched, finally Devanagri was accepted and the Script Movement came to a an end.

Religion of the Bodos

The traditional religion of the Bodos invariably linked up with the worship of *Bathou brai* or *Sibrai*, the supreme god of the Bodos. After the name of the supreme god *Bathou Brai* the religion is known as *Bathow* religion. *Bathow* means five principles of creation which must be followed by every devout member of the family.³⁵ They worship *Bathow brai* and other gods and goddesses in their religious functions and festivals known as *Kherai* and *Garza*³⁶. The Bodos have no fixed place of worship like temple, church or mosque. But in every Bodo house hold one can see a *Siju* Plant (*euphorbia splendens*) on the *Bathow* altar. Idol worship was nowhere there in *Bathow* religion. In this context Endle writes³⁷

In the typical Kachari village as a rule neither idol nor a place of worship is to be found, but to the Kachari mind and imagination earth, air and sky are alike peopled with a vast number of invisible spiritual beings, known usually as 'Modai', all possessing powers and faculties far greater than those of man, and almost invariably inclined to use this powers for malignant and malevolent rather than benevolent purpose. ... (among) the most household gods by far the most important is Bathow, who is pre-eminently the guardian of family interest and family honour. He is never represented in idol form, but is well in evidence through his living symbol, the siju (hiju) tree (*euphorbia splendens*), which is often be seen in the Kachari homestead surrounded by a circular fence of split bamboo.

Endle is of the view that the religion of the Bodo is distinctly of the type commonly known as “animistic” and its underlying principle is naturally one of fear or dread³⁸. But P.C. Bhattacharya remarks that³⁹ “the Bodos are not animistic and they are the worshiper of *Bathow*, the supreme god”. However with the change of time the religion of the Bodos has undergone some changes and innovations. Further with the change of time a large section of Bodo people have converted to Christianity and sects of Hinduism. At this time of confusion among the Bodos on religion, Kalicharan Brahma (1860-1938)⁴⁰ started “*Brahma Movement*” in the very beginning of the 20th century, which will be discussed in our fourth chapter.

Traditional Cuisine

Rice is the staple food of the Bodos, supplemented by a plentiful supply of vegetables sometimes procured from the neighbouring forests and it is seldom that they do not manage to procure some kinds of animal food, flesh or fish, of which latter they are very fond. When untainted by Hinduism, they were at liberty to eat almost every kind of flesh, (eg. Pork) with the exception of domestic cow.⁴¹

The Bodos are very much fond of meat and fish. Varieties of Dried fish and meat items are popular among them. Dried meat or pork or deer are preserved by them and use it in the time when they are busy enough. Generally these dried items are used in the time of their farming. This variety of dried flesh and dried fish are called *Bedor Goran* and *Na Goran* respectively. They also use to dry small fishes in the sun light or on the fire, apply

some quantity of stems of arum, then grind them together, store it in a bamboo tube and cover the mouth of the tube with the leaves of plantain and this is called *Napham* and it can be preserved for two or three years.⁴² Meat is very much essential item for the guest in Bodo society. They generally pleased to honour a guest with meat.

They traditionally collected the vegetables from the forest but with the change of time, collection of vegetables from forest does not remain an easy task and so they started procuring the vegetables at home. The Bodos are also very much fond of the locally prepared alkali potash, called *Kharoi* and in Assamese it is called *Khar*. Like all other tribes of Assam Bodos have their traditional beverage, rice beer called *Jau* or *Jumai* prepared by steeping rice in water for two or three days. It has a socio religious importance in Bodo society besides its day to day use. It is offered to the *Bathou Borai* (the chief of god) and other minor gods and goddesses. Before preparing *Jau* or *Jumai*, a medicine which is called *Amaw* is essential. The *Amaw* is made of uncooked rice, twelve pieces of *Mokhna* flower (a kind of wild plenty), some leaves of *Kathal* (Jack fruit tree) some leaves of Pineapple tree, leaves of *Agarcitha* (a kind of small plant) and the top leaves of the Banana tree. All these things are ground together and the dust of the things is mixed with water and then it is transformed in to a cake-form. On the cakes (the newly prepared raw *Amaw*), dust of two old *Amaw* are applied. After three or four days the new *Amaw* gets ready to use. Then the *Amaw* is mixed with cooked rice and is stored for three or four days and it becomes *Jau* or *Jumai*.⁴³ It is already mentioned that it has a socio religious importance in Bodo society. To welcome a guest with a cup of *Jumai* is a

traditional custom of the Bodos. A bodo family felt glad to entertain their guest with *Jau* and *Jumai* with pork. They have been also using it for some kind of medicinal purposes. It has religious importance also. During the festivals, ceremonies and *Pujas* they offer *Jumai* to gods and goddesses. They use rice beer as their day to day drink. They used to use it to get a kind of refreshment after a daylong hard working.

Traditional Attire

The Bodos, both young and old men traditionally put on *Gamcha*, woven at home which hangs down to the knees from the loin. During winter they use to wrap the body with a wrapper of cotton or *Endi* spun woven at home. They also use *Banian*, a sort of coat of cotton or *Endi*. The traditional Bodo women dress is called *Dokhona*. If it is plain, it is called *Sala Matha* and if ornamented, it is called *Dokhona thawsi*. The latter type of *Dokhona* is essential during the marriage ceremony while the Bride has to wear it compulsorily. But because of the admixture of the Bodos with other neighbouring ethnic group Bodo women now a days, wear *Chaddar-Mekhela*, Sari and other modern attires. Now a days, the male persons too use all modern attires.

Socio religious festivals

The Bodos traditionally celebrate different socio religious festivals. Being an agriculturist tribe, all the festivals, even a festival of religious nature has agricultural connectivity. Among the festivals that have greater agricultural connectivity are *Baicagu*, *Domaci* and *Katigacu*. *Baicagu*, (*Bohag Bihu* in Assamese) the spring festival, is a

festival of joy and merrymaking celebrated in the month of April. The festival is celebrated for seven days; the young ones dance jovially and sing songs of love and yearning. The aged and old also join them in singing and dancing. *Baicagu* has a greater agricultural connectivity as the first day of this festival is dedicated for the cattle basically cows. In this day cattle are specially taken care of. *Domaci* (*Magh Bihu* in Assamese) is the festival celebrated in the month of January (14th and 15th January). In this festival the male members of the family tie cords around the fruits-bearing trees of the house. The village elderly persons of the traditional beliefs sacrifice fowls to *Bathou Brai* and worship. The Brahma dharma followers arrange *Ahuti* on the day of full moon of *Magh* month (last part of January and first part of February) for the welfare in general. The *Katigasau* (*Katibihu* in Assamese) is observed in the last day of month of *Ashin* (14th or 15th of October generally, but strictly according to the last day of *Ashin*). It is observed very simply, by burning earthen lamp at the paddy field, the cowshed, and at the granary in the evening of the last day of *Ashin*. The unmarried girls of the Bodo families go to the paddy field with a long bamboo stick used in weeding, polished it with mustard oil and touch the paddy plants with the stick. By doing this the Bodos believe that the paddy plants would carry large scale of paddy.⁴⁴

Among the socio religious festivals *Kherai puja* and *Garja puja* have special place in the Bodo mind. Though the two important festivals are traditional religious festivals but it has its purpose linked with agriculture⁴⁵.

Kherai Puja :*Kherai Puja* is believed to be the greatest religious festival of the Bodos. The *Kherai Puja* is of four kinds according to its purpose. The four kinds of *Kherai Puja* are-the *Darshan Kherai*, the *Umrao Kherai*, the *Phalo Kherai* and the *Nowaoni Kherai*. The *Darshan Kherai* is performed in the first week of month of *Kati* worshiping the goddess of wealth *Mainao* or *Lakhmi*. It has a strong connection with *Sali* paddy and so it is also known as *Sali kherai*. Also known as *Ashu Kherai*, the *Umrao Kherai* is performed in the month of *Ashar* with a purpose of wellbeing of the villagers and the welfare of the *Ashu paddy*. *Phalo kherai* is observed in the full moon of the month of *Magha*. The *Kherai* is also known as *Dansrang Kherai*. *Nawaoni Kherai* is observed by a family when it deems necessary. Whenever a family faces any trouble they observe *Nawaoni Kherai*.

The Gajra Puja: The *Garja Puja* is another important socio religious festival of the Bodos. The Bodos observe the *Garja puja* to purify themselves and the village after any seasonal festival like *Baisagu*. They are having the believe that in the festivals they become impure because of mixture with each other, drinking from one house to another house, merrymaking etc. and it necessitates their purification and so they perform *Garja Puja*. There are many *Garja* gods and goddesses who are regularly propitiated by the Bodos. Among them the important are *Lakhi Garja*, *Ashu Garja*, *Sew Garja*, *Tulsing Mulsing Garja*, *Dura Gaja*, *Dawang Garja*, *sindur Garja*, *Thong Thongali Garja*, *Thai Garja*, *Batho Garja*, *Gu garja*, *Ihew Garja*, *phew Garja*, *Maya Garja*, *Shaya Garja*, *Dhan Khubir Garja*, *Barai Raja Garja*, *Dano Grja*, *Gala Kata Garja*, and *Othoro Shanti Garja*.

Among the different types of *Garja* the Bodos regard the following types as benevolent *Garja*;

Lakhi Garja: for the welfare of the villagers and successful crops they observe the *Lakhi Garja*. ***Ashu Garja***: For the success of *Ashu* Crop they observe the *Ashu Garja*. ***Dhan Khubir Garja***: *Dhan Khubir Garja* is the god of wealth but the god is regarded as malevolent and so they propitiate this god to keep them safe. ***Borai Raja Garja***: for the general welfare of the village the Bodos observe the *Barai Raja Garja*. It is a prayer to the God-in chief, occasionally *Borai Raja* is also known as *Bathow Borai*.

Social life of the Bodos

Apart from traditional village communities and *khels* and *mels* there is no evidence of other traditional institutions, be it educational or economic. The traditional age old social institutions (*aphats*) performed all the activities performed now a days by educational and economic institutions.⁴⁶ The Bodo villages were traditionally controlled by *Gaobura* the village elderly man. A prominent, elderly and popular person was selected by the villagers as *Gaobura* and he enjoys the office so long as the villagers desire his service. The position of *Oja* (medicine man) and *Dauri* (priest) is very high. They are regarded as very important person in the villages. No religious festivals can be performed in the absence of them.⁴⁷

In the Bodo family life they follow the patriarchal pattern. The male member is the head of the family. The Bodo social structure is primarily patriarchal with a few elements

of matriarchal characteristics.⁴⁸ There are different social groups or *Aris* in Bodo society as *Swargiari*, *Basumatari*, *Narzari*, *Musahari* etc. all the Bodo groups are of equal status. In case of inter group marriage there is no bar.

The Misings and their Culture

The Misings are an indo-mongoloid tribe inhabiting large parts of Dhemaji, Lakhimpur, Dibrugarh, Sivasagar, Jorhat, Sonitpur and Tinsukia districts of Assam (Table.1.c). A few live in and around Pasighat of East-Siang district of Arunachal Pradesh. According to the 2011 census they are the second largest tribal group (plain) following the Bodos having population of 6,80,424 (Table 1.a). Originally they were hill dwellers and inhabited the hills lying north of the upper Brahmaputra valley in Siang and Lohit districts of Arunachal Pradesh. This hill tract has been referred to as the Miri Hills and is situated between the *Aka-Dafla* and the *Abor* Hills. The region covers the entire territory to the north of the Brahmaputra Valley-roughly the area lying between the gorges of the river *Subansiri* in the west to the *Dibong* in the east. Historically it is very difficult to point out the accurate time when the Mising began their journey towards plains of Assam. But based on the administrative history of 19th century Assam and Mising folktales we may reconstruct the prevailing conditions why they started migrating towards plains. In this context we have to see the prevailing ecological condition of the North East Frontier, the mountainous terrain with high hills and mountains leaving a limited place of river valley as a cultivable land. Since the cultivable land is very scarce so the relationship

between various tribal group there is basically determined by their access to cultivable land and control over it, resultant constant war among them forcing the weaker sections to migrate. Migration has to be seen as a way of life due to political and economic condition.⁴⁹ From the various administrative account both legendary and historical it is clear that the neighbours of the Misings were the *Padam* and the *Miyong*(the *Bor-Abor*) The Misings of the plains and the *Padam* and *Miyong* of the Hills have a close ethnic, linguistic and cultural relationship.⁵⁰ The relationship between the Misings and the *Bor-Abor* was suppressive, that the stronger tribes wielded a great power over the less powerful one, resulting an exploitative relationship. Because of the exploitative and suppressive relationship Misings were forced to migrate to the plains in search of land, livelihood and protection. According to Hamilton

For a long time past the Abors have been cocks of Assam. Very independent and quarrelsome, they had come to regard themselves as the ruler of this far distant corner of India from the fact so many Miri and Mishmi tribes have submitted their exaction.⁵¹

Table: 1 .c

Pattern of Geographical Settlement of the Misings in Selected Districts of Assam

District	Total Population	Total ST Population	Total Mising (Miri) Population	Percentage of total ST population	Percentage of Mising (Miri) on total population
Dhemaji	686,133	325,560	220,042	47.44	32.06
Lakhimpur	104,2137	249,426	197,886	23.93	18.98
Sonitpur	192,4110	232,207	49,028	12.06	2.54
Tinsukia	132,7929	82,066	18,145	6.17	1.36
Dibrugarh	132,6335	102,871	9,285	7.75	0.7
Sibasagar	115,1050	49,039	27,834	4.26	2.41
Jorhat	109,2256	139,971	102,270	12.81	9.36
Golaghat	106,6888	111,765	53,028	10.47	4.97

Source: Census of India 2011

While discussing the relationship between the Mising to the Padam-Miyong Mackenzie elaborated in detail

The Miris of the plains are here claimed by the Abors as their runaway slaves. The Miris for many years acknowledged Abors as their masters. They readily agreed to be go between the Assamese and rude hill people. The Assamese Government (Native) (Ahom) anxious to conciliate their highland neighbours, had long since relieved Miris of all revenue charges, acknowledging thereby the subjection of that tribes to Abors. During the Burmese invasion and after the British assimilation of Assam, more than one community of the Miris moved away from the vicinity of their Abor lords, and one of the earliest notices of the Abors outside of the geographical memories in an account of the demand made by the Duba tribe of Bor-Abor in February, 1830, that the British authorities would send back a village of the Miris who had made away to the detriment of the Abor trade. The government of course could not coerce the Miris in returning, but it sanctioned certain expenditure by the Political Agent with a view to induce them and kindred tribes to settle where they could minister to the wants of the Abors in the way of trade. (Mackenzie 1884:37 emphasis added)⁵²

John M Cosh recording in 1837, states that the Miris (Misings) occupy that strip of alluvial land along the north bank of Brahmaputra, from the large island Majuli to the river Dihong, the northern branch of the Brahmaputra; and bounded on the north by the hill country of Abors.⁵³

Thus Mising emigration to the plains continued for a long period of time. The Misings as a distinct tribe of the North East have been mentioned in the vaishnava literature and the contemporary Ahom chronicle. The classic *Kirtan Ghosha* by

Sankardeva(1449-1568)⁵⁴ composed sometime between 1516 to 1568 mentions about the Miris (Misings) along with the other non Aryan tribes of the region.⁵⁵ Reference to the Miris (Misings) also found in *Nam-Gosha* composed by Madhabdeva (1489-1596)⁵⁶. This references point out that the Misings started settlement in plains of Assam as early as the vaishnava movement in Assam and there is ground to suspect that the date may even be pushed back. It was however possible that their number was few and insignificant in the whole population complex of the plains.

The Ahom rulers (1228-1826) beginning from the 17th century came into contact with the Misings. During the reign of Ahom king Pratap Singh (1603-1614) and later on in 1665 in the reign of Chakradhwaj Singh (1663-1670) Misings created border problems. But the Ahom kings subjugated them with forces. From the above account we may infer the point that till the middle of the 17th century the Misings remained basically confined to the hills lying in the border areas of the Ahom kingdom and only later on did their emigration as organized group begin. The references of Miris (Mising) in the Vishnava literature points out their settlement in the plains as early as the vaishnava movement in Assam. However it was possible that their number was few and insignificant in the whole population complex of the plain or their emigration was scattered and in tiny group that has not been noticed by the Ahom state⁵⁷.

The emigration of the Misings to the plains of Assam was spread over a long period of time starting approximately in the 16th century and continued till the early

decades of 20th century; they had to settle whenever the virgin areas existed in the Brahmaputra Valley in upper Assam. Because of the staggered nature of their emigration to the plain it was not possible to settle in one compact region, however invariably settled on the banks of the major rivers of upper Assam including the bank of the river Brahmaputra. It has been seen that the Mising villages are located on the banks of *Subansiri, Dikrong, Dishang, Dihing, Digaru, Bharali*, besides many other smaller rivers. One of the most dominant areas that are inhabited by the Mising is, however Majuli, the river island in the Brahmaputra.

Though the emigration of the Mising to the plain initially was in small scale gradually it became more and larger and continued up to the beginning of the 20th century. The phenomena became clear from the 1911 decennial census of Assam (see table 2.e, second chapter) where it has been shown that each successive census report shows a very substantive increase in the number of the Mising which clearly points out that there must be continued emigration from the hills.

During the reign of the Ahom (1228-1826), the hill tribes of the North Eastern hills lived in complete independence. The Misings by their continuous migration to the plains of Assam came to the contact of the Chutiyas⁵⁸, who ruled the eastern most part of the Sobansiri adjoining the Sadiya area, came into contact with the Ahoms only when the Chutiya kingdom was invaded and conquered by the Ahoms in 16th century. The Ahom king Suhungmung (1497-1539) annexed the Chutiya kingdom in 1523. During this time

Misings were not subjugated and under the jurisdiction of the Ahom kingdom. It was the time that the Misings remained independent and some of the Hill tribes including the Misings, the Daflas and the Abors were in the habit of raiding the villages of the border areas of the Ahom kingdom. According to Gait⁵⁹ the Misings and the Daflas raided the villages of the Ahom kingdom bordering the Misings in 1615 and Ahoms sent a force to resist them, but failed to subjugate them. In 1655 the Misings again made a raid on the Ahom subjects and the Ahoms resisted it with their force. This time Misings lost and many of their villages were burnt the Ahoms. The Misings consented to pay an annual tribute and also gave twelve men to the Ahoms in lieu of two whom they had killed⁶⁰. It is seen that although the Misings initially remained independent and resisted the Ahoms, finally they were subjugated by the Ahoms. In the Ahom reign besides according them the status of subject population; some Misings were allotted responsible position in the Ahom administration. The *Miri Sandikoi* played a commendable role in collecting secret information from important officials of Ram Singh. By the beginning of the eighteen century the Mising close contact with the Ahoms and the later, besides according to them the status of a subject population⁶¹ also recruited some of them to the fighting force and used to give important assignment in state administration.⁶² It is also supplemented by the contemporary Persian work. The *Alamgirnama* for instance, records that the range of the hills inhabited by the *Kampo-Bhutiya*s, *Miri-Mishimis* and the *Daflas* belong to Assam⁶³. Sihabuddin Talis states that although most of the North Eastern hill tribes, did not pay

tribute to the Ahoms yet they accepted their sovereignty and obeyed some of his commands.

Towards the end of the 18th century, the unbroken reign of the Ahoms almost of six hundred years with so much vigour and influence began to disintegrate having largely been devastated by the havoc and half a century long civil war of Moamorias, and latter by Burmese invasion resulting signing of treaty of Yandabo in 1826. As a result Assam came under the British rule in 1826, when according to Yandabo Treaty that ended the Anglo-Burmese war; the king of Ava (Burma) renounced “*all claims upon*” and agreed to “*abstain from all future interference with, the principality of Assam and its dependencies, and also with the contiguous petty states of Cachar and Jyntea*”. Further it has been seen that though the plains of Assam went under British colonial rule in 1826, the major portion of the territory inhabited by the Misings particularly the Murkongselek and Sadiya area had remained free from British occupation till 1911, when a British expedition conquered this area along with adjoining *Adi* territory. The colonial rulers for administrative purpose grouped and regrouped the tribal people and territories of Assam. As per the suggestion of the Montagu-Chelmsford report, 1918, section 52-A was inserted in Govt of India Act, 1935 as a consequence of which the following territories of the then province of Assam were declared as backward tracts, a. The Garo Hill districts, b. the British portion of Khasi and Jaintia Hills district (other than the shillong municipality and cantonment) c. Mikir Hill d. The North Cachar Hills e. The Naga Hill District, f. the Lushai Hill Districts g. Sadiya frontier tract, h. The Balipara Frontier Tract i. Lakhimpur

Frontier tract. Thus the traditional Mising territory was divided and parts of the territory were placed in Sadiya, Balipara and Lakhimpur backward tracts while the rest were kept under the provincial administration of British Assam. Further in 1936 the backwards tracts were re-categorised as “excluded and partially excluded areas” and a large number of Mising area were grouped with NEFA, and became “Excluded Areas”⁶⁴. These excluded areas exempted from the powers of the provincial legislature and were administered by the governor himself. This provision of the Government of India act 1935 was by and large retained by the Indian (Provisional Constitutional) Order 1947 when India became independent.

Language of the Misings

Mising is member of the Tibeto-Burman group of Languages.⁶⁵ According to T.R Taid⁶⁶ the language has its variations based on the social stratification, regional variations. The Mising people are divided into some sub-groups having different characteristic dialect of each group. Each Mising sub-groups including, *Chayengia*, *Pagro*, *Delu*, *Ayengia*, *Dambukial*, *Samua* has slightly separate tones of their own. While there is much similarity among *Chayengia*, *Pagro* and *Delu* tones on the other hand *Ayengia*, *Dambukial*, *Samua* has similarity among them. But as the language is basically same each of these sub-groups can follow each other easily. Mising Language has no script of its own and it did not have written tradition before independence. In the pre-independence period Christian Missionaries used Roman Script to preach Christianity in the Adi-Mising

area. William Robinson⁶⁷ was one of the American Baptist Missionaries and a frontline academician of 19th century Assam was the first man to attempt to grammarise the Mising Language. His “*A Short Outline of Miri Grammar*” was published in the March issue of “*Journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal*”, in 1849.⁶⁸ Joseph Francis Needham⁶⁹, the assistant Political officer at Sadiya published a grammar of Mising Language in 1886 titled “*Outline Grammar of the Shaiyang Miri Language as spoken by the Miris of that clan residing the neighbourhood of Sadiya*”. In 1896 he rendered the all time popular story of “*Prodigal Son*” from the Bible in to Mising Language. In 1899 he wrote another story based on an episode prevailing in a village courts. Another dictionary on Mising Language “*A Dictionary of the Abor-Miri Language*” was compiled by James Herbert Lorrain, a clergy man was posted to Sadiya in 1900 and the same published from Shillong in 1910⁷⁰.

After independence a few booklets and magazines in the Mising language were published using the Assamese script. But in this early attempt to give it to a written standard form could not succeed. A systematic attempt in this regard began only in 1968, with the formation of Guwahati Mising Kebang and took the responsibility of give it to the Mising Language a written standard form. This pioneer organization published booklets in Mising language using Assamese-Bengali script as well as the Roman by way of experiments. Being entrusted by the association Sri Nahendra Padun⁷¹ published a book called “*Mising Bhakhar Lipi: Eti Porikhyamulak Asoni*” in 1969. The “*Mising Agom Luyior*” was published jointly by T.R. Taid and N. Padun using Assamese Script.⁷² Its

efforts were later reinforced by the Mising Agom Kebang⁷³ established in 1972 for the development of the Mising Language. Finally, the Mising Agom Kebang opted for the Roman system, finding it much simpler from graphological as well as pedagogical point of view. However the Roman alphabet was adopted only with extensive modifications.⁷⁴

Mising Language was studied and books were published even before the formation of the Mising Agom Kebang. “*Miri Duan*” (1915) by S.Panyangkataky is the first book on the Mising Language. Later on “*Mising Path*” (1958) by K.C Padun, “*Mising Agom*” (1963) by B Pegu was published. After the formation of Mising Agom Kebang it has initiated and encouraged writings in a standard form.

Religion of the Misings

The Misings believe that all beings, animate and inanimate objects of the universe created by a supreme power. Thus animism, animatisms, and super naturalism came to be basic ingredients of Mising religion.⁷⁵ While writing on the tribal people of North East India V. Elwin observes⁷⁶ *for centuries, the real rule of tribal people here has been Environmental; it has shaped their bodies, directed their tongue; it has been their governor, their policy maker.*

For them nature remain always malevolent, forever hostile and ill disposed towards them adjustment with such unkind nature has demanded them of some regulated behavior. Propitiatory measures to keep off the malfeasance of nature has, in them resulted in a set of religious belief among the Misings.⁷⁷ B.N. Dutta is of the opinion

that⁷⁸ the Mising religion is made up of the beliefs and rituals centered round basically on some vaguely defined body of gods and spirits and certain form of ancestor worship. Among the gods the *Donyi* and *Polo* seem to occupy a special position in the Mising mind. The Mising supernatural world is full of various kinds of spirits (*uyu*), and these spirits has to be propitiated by the way of sacrifice, incantations, and charms and in this process the *Mibus* (priest) are working as a mediator between the human and supernatural world. It is seen that worship of *Taleng Uyu* (god of thunder), *Asi uyu* (god of intestinal disease) are popular among them. The Misings believe in the existence of a supernatural being, which is powerful, omnipotent and omnipresent. According to the Mising believe everything there in universe exist and existing through him, he is called *Donyi-Po:lo*. Based on the name of the supreme god *Donyi-Po:lo* the traditional Mising religion is known as *Donyi-Po:lo*. A thought being creator of all beings in the universe by one supreme god was very apparent in the minds of Misings. *Sedi* with mother *Melo* by their conjugal effort created all living and non-living being in the earth. One of their *aabangs* thus runs⁷⁹

“Mi Kamangai Mimang Kamangai,

Donyi Kamangai Po:lo Kamangai,

Longe Kamangai Yumme Kamangai,

Amonge Kamangai Achche Kamangai,

Emme Kamangai Esare Kamangai,

Sedi babu Bottebi edem pilentone.”

Gist-No man was there, no matter was there, no Sun was there , no Moon was there, there was no day no night, there was no soil no water, neither fire was there, nor air was there, but father *Sedi*, the supreme lord had created them all.

Although *Donyi* and *Polo* can be literally interpreted as the Sun and Moon, they convey certain ideas having direct bearing on spiritual and physical life of the people. As per as the physical aspect is concerned, *Donyi Polo* conveys the vision of Sun and Moon, which give warmth, energy and benevolent light to the humanity, while according to the spiritual interpretation, the ‘Supreme reality’ they believe *Sedi*, to whom *Donyi* and *Po:lo* are two searching eyes. So, the Misings conduct themselves in the name of *Donyi* and *Polo* to realize the highest order of truth. In Mising believe the Sun and Moon are not only the object of worship, they are symbols of divine and creative supreme power omnipotent and omnipresent⁸⁰. The Misings believe that *Donyi* and *Polo* sprang from *Sedi* and *Melo*. In the context of *Donyi-Po:lo* V. Elwin writes *it is the eye of the world; he is as important to man as eye is to the body. It watches everything...above all he is the lord of truth and an oath taken on his name is most binding of all.*⁸¹

With the passage of time the traditional Mising religion has gone tremendous changes. Jatin Mipun rightly observes that the present religion of the Misings is the synthetic product of Animism and Hinduism and this is known as *Kewalia* or

Kalasanghati or *Nishamoliya*.⁸² Different forms of Hinduism and other religious practices prevalent among the local populace got entered into their religious practices and beliefs. In spite this mixture they are maintaining most of their traditional beliefs on supernatural beings and other customary practices related to birth and death. It is seen that the name of *Donyi-Po:lo* is recited in every rituals and festivals. Some of the main *pujas* cum festivals of the Mising are *Porag*, *Ali-Ai-Ligang*, *Taleng Uyu*, *Dabur*, *Asi Uyu*, *Yummrang Uyu* and *Dodgang*, *Urum Apin* etc.⁸³

Traditional Cuisine

The staple food of the Mising community consists of rice, meat, fish and a large variety of leafy vegetables. Numerous leafy vegetables like *Pakkom*, *Takuk*, *Tajik*, *Kukpiang Okolongbiring*, *Ombe*, *Okang*, *Nekung*, *Patang Oying*, *Oo Oying*, *Genyang*, *Yorid*, *Onger*, *Takkir*, *Marsang*, *Bungki Repung* are some of the special vegetables generally grows in nature are abundant in Mising food items. Their great delicacies are fowl and pork for which flock of fowls and herd of pigs are reared. Pork and Chicken are principal items of food in religious function or in hosting guests. They feel proud of hosting guests with pork. As a reverine tribe, fish is very much common in their food items. They use various preservative methods to preserve both fish and meat. The smoke fish '*ngosan*' is one of such fish variety. The '*ngosan*' are prepared by smoking fish in bamboo shelves. '*Namsing*' is another such variety of preserved fish with other vegetables

of medicinal value. Dried fish and meet are not only popular items among them, but also must in *Ali Aye Ligang*. *Namsing* serves their need during the dearth of fresh fish.

Like any other tribe of Tibeto-Burman origin the Misings prepare rice beer called *Apong*. The *Apong* is of two varieties different in taste, colour and the method of preparation. *Nogin Apong* is creamy white and fermented from boiled rice, but *Poro Apong* has a dark greenish colour due to addition ashes of straw and paddy husk. But on both the preparation, an extract of various medicinal plant '*epop*' is added in right portion. Fermentation starts in '*Nogin*' within four days and is generally ready for extraction within seven days. It is extracted by adding water, squeezing through a bamboo sieve and served immediately. *Poro Apong* takes longer time to ferment and is extracted through a funnel- shaped bamboo cone. Fermented *Nogin Apong* cannot be preserved, but *Poro Apong* can be preserved for several months. However *Apong* is an essential item for performing socio-religious function. Besides, using *Apong* in their day to day life, they feel pleased to offer *Apong* to their guest.⁸⁴

The Misings have the habit of taking considerable varieties of roots also. To mention some of them in their native tongue *Mayong*, *Ali*, *Lodor*, *Pagli*, *Singgali*, *Kamrali*, *Ngintiali* etc. in addition to prepare their delicacies they adopts various methods of cooking, boiling, roasting, toasting etc. Traditionally they do not use oil and spices but with the change of time use of oil and spices and new methods of cooking have widely

been adopted by them. The Misings had no tradition of milk use or use of any milk item. However, now a days milk has become their common item.⁸⁵

Socio Religious Festivals

Being an agricultural community the Mising festivals are generally connected with agriculture. The festivals of Mising community cannot be divided strictly in to social and religious as they are inseparably mixed together. The most significant among them are *Ali Aye Ligang* and *Porag*.

Ali Aye Ligang: *Ali Aye Ligang* is an agricultural festival. It is celebrated to mark the onset of season of sowing seeds. The derivative meaning of *Ali Aye Ligang* is *Ali*-roots, *Aye*-Fruits, *Ligang*-sowing. As we know that the Mising is an agriculturist tribe and whether Jhuming or Settled cultivation *Ahu* paddy was their principal product. The oncoming of *Ahu* season is marked by the celebration of *Ali Aye Ligang*, a festival of prayer and dance with the symbolic sowing of handful *Ahu* seeds into the womb of mother earth is performed. The folk belief behind the celebration of this festival is associated with the fertility of the virgin Earth. There were no fixed date for this occasion and a group of villages celebrated the festival sometimes in the month of *Fagun* (*February.15 to March.15*) and *Chaitra* (*March.15 to April.15*) of Assamese calendar. But since 1956 the first Wednesday of month of *Fagun* is fixed as the auspicious day and celebrated all over.

By the afternoon of the day a handful of *Ahu* seed is sown by each head of the family over a small patch of land, hoed decorated with wild reed '*Peero*' in the eastern part of the paddy field, chanting the following:⁸⁶

“Silo akossina,

Ato gumin togung gumin

Sedi-melo, karsing-kartak

Donyi-polo, rukji merang

Tatdag kadag lanka;

Silo ngolu ali aye liga-duneke

Silo akossina,

Koje yango gosa moteika

A: m ambinem Kankan moteika”...etc

Gist-

“On this auspicious day,

Oh, forefathers, Sedi-melo, Krsing-kartak, Dnyi-polo, Ants and alike,

All of your bear witness;

Today we are sowing the seed into womb of mother earth; let mother earth be fertile,

Capable of bearing abundant crop.

Let there be good harvest” etc.

Then they promise that ‘out of the harvest, the priest and benefactors will have their shares; beggars will be fed. Only the remaining part will be kept for our own consumption.’⁸⁷ From the very day of sown for five days, till the seed does not come out, some works are not done including cutting of Bamboo, digging soil etc. in this five days no eggs are consumed.⁸⁸ The whole village goes festive in this occasion. Young and old irrespective of sex takes part in a community dance known as *Pakso-monam* or *Gumrag-Sonam*. Thus they observe the festival with enthusiasm for three to five days with a variation of time span from group to group and conclude it with a community feast namely *Dopan-Tipan*.

Porag: *Porag* is the example of sharing characteristics of social and religious function. The festival marks the harvesting time of paddy which is celebrated with feast and prayers executed with elaborated programme spread over three days. Although it is celebrated as a social festival connected with agriculture, it also incorporates a lot of religious practices. The festival has preserved the continuity of the *Murong* in the community, as *Murung* is must in the performance of this occasion. The festival is organized by *Mimbir-Yame* (organization of the young adults). Before the festival a

Murong is constructed, whose platform is four feet above the ground, and parallel to the river flow.⁸⁹ After every preparation, a *Miboo* (priest) is appointed for prayer where *Mimber-Yame* of the neighbouring villages is also invited⁹⁰. The function starts with early hours of a Wednesday with inaugural pouring of the first pale of water through the *Pobor* amidst chanting of prayers, beating of drums, and young man and girls including *Minoms* dancing and encircling the *Murong* five times. After the day long activity the night starts with a prayer dance *Miboo-Sumnam* led by the *Miboo*. All the members of the *Mimber-Yame* join in the line. Second day is devoted to feed the special guest. The last prayer dance appears to be the reminiscence of the *Ponu*-dance of the past.⁹¹ Though *Mibu* was must for *Porag*, but of late duo to pressing circumstances there has been great variation in the mood of celebrating the festivals as some areas they do not call *Miboo* to lead the prayer. It has been seen that because of the immensity of expenditure and elaborateness of preparation it is generally celebrated at an interval of five to ten years by a village preferably in the month of *Magha* or *Fagun*.

Dobur: *Dobur* is a fervently celebrated religious function of Mising community. It is observed on the first Wednesday of the month of *Jetha*. However, variation of the date of its observance is found with different groups. There are different types of *Dobur* considering different objectives and different time. Generally there are four types of *Dobur*, *Mapun Dobur*, *Kasan Dobur*, *Burti Dobur* and *Raban Kasan*. At the day of *Dobur* the male member of the village mark a closure of the gateways to and from the village by planting the leaves of some reeds that are vertically staked for the purpose of

both sides of the way. This act of closing ways is called *Nipir Pirtumnam*. As soon as the closure is done, neither a villager can leave the village nor can an outsider can enter.⁹² Though it is seen that these are the significant traditional festivals of Misings, yet they perform the three main *Bihus* of Assam namely the *Magh Bihu*, *Bohag Bihu* and *Kati Bihu*.⁹³ They celebrate the *Magh Bihu* and *Bohag Bihu* with same enthusiasm that with *Ali Aye Ligang*.⁹⁴ The three *Bihus*, now a days are regarded as a part of Mising culture. The *Bihu* songs and Mising *Oinitoms* are equally popular among Misings.⁹⁵

Social Structure

The Mising society traditionally runs with democratic norms.⁹⁶ There was no such record of being monarch and such type of position in the Mising socio-political system. Generally each village has a *Gam* (village headman), the most experienced, knowledged, efficient man of the village and he is entrusted the duty of *Gam* ordering to the common will of the villager in *Kebang*. It is not a hereditary post and one is entrusted the duty according to his efficiency. The *Gam* is the custodian of that particular village.⁹⁷

Kebang: The *Kebang*, the committee of the village elders, with one member from each family was supreme organization in all matters-social and religious within a village (till the time the Panchayat system was introduced in Assam). *Kebang* traditionally was a three tier institution-the committee of a particular village is called *Kebang*, the organization of more than one *Kebang* of the neighbouring villages is called *Bane Kebang* and the organization of multiple *Bane Kebang* is called *Banga Kebang*.⁹⁸ But the post

independence administrative rules did not validate this institution and as a result the institutions became irrelevant. Still some complaint regarding social and religious brought to the notice of the village *Kebang* and it deliver judgment and punish the offenders depending upon the nature of the offence. The *kebang* is held in a public hall called *Murong*. *Gam* presides over the meetings of *Kebang*.

Murong: In the past the unmarried young men used to sleep in a public hall to guard the villagers and it is called *Murong*.⁹⁹ It was the institution where the training in social responsibility was imparted. The *Kebang* of a particular village is held in *Murong*. But because of modernization the practice has passed away.

Mimbir Yame: The youths of a Mising village had a self governing institution called *Mimbir Yame*. *Mimbir Yame*, the committee of the young boys and girls primarily for unmarried girls after attaining puberty and of men in the age group of fifteen to twenty five. But elderly persons are also involved for maintenance of discipline, training of tribal etiquette and social responsibilities. Disciplines were maintained by some selected office bearers called called *Bora*, *Borua*, *Bhuyan* etc. the original designations of these officers have been long replaced by *Bora*, *Borua* in the style of Ahom administration.¹⁰⁰ *Mimbir Yame* was an institution of the Mising youths with social responsibility. It renders help to persons with need within the village like construction of house, wedding paddy, clearing jungle or harvesting.

Traditional Attire

The Misings of Assam are having a colourful dress traditionally. All the traditional dress of Mising man and women are homemade. Black, yellow, deep red and bottle green on white backdrops or vice versa, are their favourite colours. However only the black and deep red on white backdrop is used in dress meant for men. *Ribi*, *Gaseng*, *Gero*, *Ege*, *Sekrek* etc. are the dresses for Mising women. Dress of Married and unmarried Mising women are different. The young ones use *Ege* (to cover the lower part of the body), *Kupop* (to cover the chest) and after attaining puberty *Kupop* is replaced by *Ribi*. Another item is *Gaseng*, which is used to wrap round the body. These *Ribi* and *Gaseng* are added by *Gero* when they are married.¹⁰¹ The Mising men dress items are *Galuk* or *Mibu Galuk*, *Dummer*, *Ugon*, *Tongali* or *Jinrek* etc. *Galuk* is a shirt with open front and short sleeves, made of thick home spun cotton. *Dummer* is a piece of hand woven headgear while *Ugon* is a long piece of hand woven white dhoti.¹⁰²

Objectives of the Study

The Bodo and the Mishing are two major tribes living on the north bank of the Brahmaputra valley. Through an age-old historical process of assimilation these two groups considered once themselves no other than but Assamese, gradually began to stress their different identity from the Assamese and raised some fundamental questions to the process of fabrication of Assamese formation. The impact of Hinduisation which has been perpetuating through a long historical process is distinctly noticeable in this assimilation

process. However as a result of the advent and the preaching of Christianity by its missionary a section of tribal people embraced this new religion in Assam. In this context, it has been seen that although Christianity could not suck the Mising as it was able in case of Bodo, the effect cannot be overlooked. It is noteworthy that a good number of Bodo people embraced Christianity at that very time and this conversion went on in the later period also. In this juncture, Kalicharan Brahma founded Brahma movement in order to unify the diversified Bodo people on the basis of religion. Mentionable that Kalicharan Brahma converted his venture into a socio religious reform movement latter.

. For a comprehensive discourse of the facts of Bodo and Mising self assertion movement, it has to be analyzed the political events of India and of Assam in particular of that time. Re-organization of states on the basis language is one of the major events of the post-independent India. Accordingly, Assam was a reconstituted in 1963 and Naga Hills and Tuensung area of North-East Frontier Agency was converted into Nagland. It was followed by another process of reorganization and as a result, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur and Tripura were created and made the demand of the plain tribals seems possible.

Accordingly the socio-cultural and political scenario of Assam in 60s and 70s has far reaching impact on the tribal affairs of Assam. The matter of Assam official Language Act 1960 and adoption of Assamese language as medium of instruction in the colleges and universities created a discontent among the tribals of Assam. Role of Assam Sahitya

Sabha and All Assam Students Union, both non-political organizations having the ideological and organizational capacity of defining and pursuing its political agenda, both in the language issue and the later political developments of Assam sow the seeds of suspicion among tribal leaders in this period. In this context the political upheavals of the 1980s of Assam are much significant. The Assam movement led by All Assam Students' Union which took place in 1979-1985 to identify and deport illegal immigrants and in demand of greater autonomy was converted into a six years long mass movement and it ended up with an accord signed in 1985. The participation of tribal people in this movement is also remarkably noticeable. The leadership of Assam movement formed the government later. It has to be looked into performance of this government whether it could fulfill the desires and expectations of the tribal people.

It has to be noted that the issue of self-governance of the tribal people of the plains of Assam including the Bodo and the Mising was not raised in the post- independence period only. Rather, it has been seen that the back-ground of these movements in the colonial period itself. How the Tribal League did form in long back 1933 in colonial period raised the political issues of the tribal people and the PTCA struggle to realize the expectations of the tribal people has to be addressed carefully. It is noteworthy that PTCA demanded *Udayachal* in the form of union territory for the plain tribals of the north bank. Likewise, other organizations like Bodo Sahitya Sabha, All Bodo Students Union, Takam Mising Porin Kebang, Mising Bane Kebang also played vibrant role to raise the

fundamental issues of the Bodos and the Misings. However, it is seen that gradually mobilization of people in cultural line and revival of cultural elements became the instrumental tool of the Bodo and the Mising self assertion movement.

Present work is an attempt to address the following questions:

- What are the factors responsible for emergence of Bodo and Mising self-assertion movement?
- How people are culturally mobilised in these movements?
- What is the process of revivalism of the cultural elements?
- How state tries to manage diversity in this multi-ethnic set up and what are the changing dynamics in the Bodo and Mising movements?

Scope of the study

The scope of the work is confined to the socio-political movements of the Bodos and the Misings of Assam in the 20th century. The study aimed at an in-depth study on the socio-political movements of the Bodos and the Misings, and the processes of cultural mobilization taking place in these movements. It seeks to analyze the background and various factors behind the emergence of these movements, the processes of cultural mobilization in these movements with a focus on the process of revivalism of cultural elements. While analyzing the issue the study traces how state tries to manage diversity in

a multi-ethnic set up and what are the changing trends in the Bodo and Mising movement basically in the post accord period.

Literature Review

One of the essential preliminary tasks of research study is the review of existing literature in the area of interest. The literature review is an integral part of the entire research process and makes a valuable contribution to almost every operational step. Although we have immense valuable works on the Ethnic Movements of North-East India but then also we don't have any single critical work analyzing the cultural dimension of these movements i.e. the processes of cultural mobilization, cultural re-construction taking place in these movements, particularly in Assam.

There are a few books on ethnicity and those of nationalism multiculturalism etc. *Ethnicity* (1996) a book edited by John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith is considered as a major source study of social and political conflict in developing and developed societies. The book, having sixty three readings and eight central ideas provides a broad range of interpretations and data while the discussions on the central ideas forward a key to understand the development of the concept 'ethnicity'.

The Ethnicity Reader-Nationalism, Multiculturalism and Migration (2010) by Montserrat Guibernau and John Rex is a collection of readings on key concepts of ethnicity, nationalism, multiculturalism, migration etc. The readings of part one has discussions dealing with the relation between the concept of ethnicity and those of the

nation, nationalism and nation state while the second part deals with transnational migrant communities and the constitution of multicultural societies.

Marketing in a Multicultural World-Ethnicity, Nationalism and Cultural Identity (1995) by Janeen Arnold Costa and Garry J. Bamossy is a collection of eighteen essays raising scholarly debates on the political, economic and social realities that grip the modern world. The book '*breaks new ground, synthesizing materials, analyzing trends, assessing data and defining and describing culture and cultural identity in its various manifestation*'.

Benedict Anderson in his classic *Imagined communities: Reflections on the Origin and spread of Nationalism* (1991) analyses the origin and spread of nationalism in the framework of world history. He said that the nations were not the determinate product of given sociological conditions such as language, race or religion, they had been, in Europe and everywhere else in the world, imagined into existence. He also described some of the major institutional forms of thought which this imagined community comes to acquire concrete shape, specially the institutions of what he called 'Print capitalism'. He then argued that the historical experience of nationalism in Western Europe, in the Americas and in Russia had supplied for all subsequent nationalisms as a set of modular forms from which nationalist elites in Asia and Africa has chosen the one they liked.

Besides, there are some other books on these issues particularly on Indian context. Partha Chatterjee in his book *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial*

Histories (1993) explains the various aspects of nationalism and has discussions on national culture or 'inner domain'. He discussed the dark side of nationalism and said that two greatest war of the 20th century were brought about by Europe's failure to manage its own ethnic nationalism. In 1950s and 60s nationalism was regarded as a feature of the victorious anti colonial struggles in Asia and Africa. He says "But in the post colonial states when the new institutional practices of economy and polity were disciplined and normalized under the conceptual rubrics of development and modernization, nationalism was already being regulated to the domain of the particular histories this or that colonial empire. And in those specialized histories defined by the unprepossessing contents of colonial archives, the emancipator aspects of nationalism were undermined by countless revelations of secret deals, manipulations and the cynical pursuit of private interests". In the 1970s nationalism became an ethnic question and turned into a matter of Ethnic politics resulting various movements, wars etc.

Ethnonationalism in India-A Reader (2012), a book edited by Sanjib Baruah, having sixteen essays offers theoretical and political perspective on ethnonational movements of India. The book addresses the issues dealing with ethnonationalism and its various forms such as secessionism, separatism, regionalism and sub-nationalism and Indian federal approach to address these issues. The book, an ethnology of key theoretical essays and analytical writings on ethnonational movements and conflicts that frame scholarly debates.

Baruah in his another book *India Against Itself: Assam and the Politics of Nationality* (1999) points out several factors that led to the emergence of various sub-nationalism in North-East. He argues that apart from the democratizing impact of modern times, these are two other reasons why these sub-nationals started seeking differentiation and autonomy. The first reason according to him is that of the newly formed states of North Eastern region work as a reference for them and secondly, the culture, economic and political transformation took place under the colonial period has made mobility into the Assamese formation seems unattractive and pointless. He says that the political, Economic and Cultural transformation that took place in the colonial and post colonial Assam has a great impact on the emergence on these movements. The development that took place was lopsided and the process of assimilation was unequal. According to Baruah “ *the central theme in the Bodo cultural politics is to stop and overthrow the process of an equal assimilation in to Assamese sub national formation and to seek differentiation from and equality with the ethnic Assamese.*”

Hiren Gohain and Dilip Borah in their book (ed) *Asom Andolan-Pratisruti aru Falasruti* (2007) discussed the class attitude of the Assamese middle class who ignored the tribal language, culture as backward and did not give importance on their development. According to them the Assamese middle class model of greater Assamese community is just a model dominated by so called Assamese culture, language and so on. The development process is quite undemocratic. The Assamese nationalist could not take

a liberal and democratic attitude towards greater Assamese society formation and it took a narrow shape which forced these tribal communities to search for their separate identity.

Debabrata Sarmah in his book *Asomia Jatigothon Prakriya Aaru Jatiya Janagosthigota Anusthansamuh* (2006) argued that the tribal people of Assam always tried their best to maintain unity in diversity in the multicultural social set up of Assam. But the attitude of the mainstream ethnic Assamese was totally discouraging. The mainstream Assamese used to ignore the cultural uniqueness of the tribals and started an assimilation process. Again the process of assimilation was imposed and restricted by the mainstream ethnic Assamese. The mass-media, dominated by upper caste Hindus, also played an active role in this process of imposed assimilation. But the attitude of the mainstream ethnic Assamese was totally discouraging. Niru Hazarika in her book *Ethnic Autonomy Question in North East India-Search for an Answer* (2005) said that the identity movements in north east India has its root in India's colonial past.

D Nath in his book *Religion and society in North East India* (ed) (2011) argues that politicization of religion is one of the main characteristics of present religious development in the North Eastern region. He mentioned the cases of religious assertion against the dominating religious systems to ensure their identity and political standing in the society dominated mainly by the upper class Hindu communities. He points out the emergence of the *do:nyi-po:lo* sect among the Misings and Adis of Arunachal Pradesh in recent times, expansion of *Brahma Dharma* by the Bodos, script question and the go back

process to traditional system among the Meities , the Seng Khasi movement among the Khasis have important bearing in the recent political development in this region.

Pahi Saikia in her book *Ethnic Movements and Violence in Northeast India* (2011) well discussed the causes of emergence of these ethnic movements in North East India with special reference to Bodos, Misings and Dimasas of Assam. The British divided the territories of India's north eastern region in to excluded and partially excluded areas and categorized the people inhabiting these areas as backward or forest tribes. This engendered the creation of different categories of people living in the north east bases on their ethnic origins, socio cultural divisions and habitation as indo mongoloid and indo Aryans, as tribes and non tribes, and further within the tribal groups as plains tribes and hills tribes. This categorization and the re-drawn of the territorial boundaries by the colonial rulers and its post colonial development adversely resulted in isolationism and backwardness of the tribal groups. In the post colonial period, when the process of state building started the broader Assamese society was again divided in terms of difference in social hierarchy and power structure. "The prevailing discourse was that while the Assamese speaking majority people were relatively modernized and developed and the tribal groups were considered to be significantly alienated and backward." According to her the post colonial policies of homogenization and assimilation opened the door for ethno-nationalist movements in North-East India. "*Bodo ethno-nationalism developed within the context of state building, as a reaction to growing regional dominance of the Assamese speaking group.*" She again argued that the majoritarian policies adopted by the

Assam government in 1960s produced chain of autonomy movements. “*Among them were the Misings who mobilized for autonomy as a means to cultural recognition, political representation and above all, powers to control local resources.*”

Besides, there are some other works which have throw lights on the history and socio-cultural heritage of the Bodos and the Misings. Sydney Endle’s book *The Kacharis* (1975) is primarily a monograph treating of that branch of the Kachari race which lives in scattered hamlets along the foothills of the Himalayas in northern Bengal and Assam. The book with full of information on *Kacharis* is a harbinger in any research on *Kacharis*. The first chapter of the book deals with biological characteristics of Bodos, origin and migration and placed a distinct sketch about the race in front of us. The second chapter is about social and domestic life of the Bodos while the third chapter deals with laws and customs. Going through these chapters one can obviously have a good idea about their life style, social structure and set up and traditional customs by which the society runs. Fourth chapter deals with religion and religious practices. Here he discusses about different religious beliefs and practices, about how these practices are observed. Here he discusses in detail about different deities and how these deities are worshiped by Bodos. Section five of this book discusses the folklore, traditions and superstitions among Bodos while section six attempts ‘a very slight outline sketch of Kachari Grammar...doing something to supply with a useful vocabulary of words and phrases.’¹⁰³ The book ends with two appendixes titled Tribes Closely allied to Kacharis and Specimens of the Bodo. The book is an excellent attempt to explore about several aspects of the Kacharis and the Bodos of

Assam particularly. It is an excellent monograph having discussion on the origin, migration and socio cultural life of the Bodos of Assam.

A Descriptive analysis of the Bodo Language (1977) by Promod Chandra Bhattacharya is an extensive work on the Bodo language. The book is the first to subject such a large corpus of Boro materials to the techniques of analysis of modern descriptive linguistic. Jatin Mipun in his book *The Mishings (Miris) of Assam: Developing of a new life style* (2012) discusses about the migration, settlement and trending changes on their life style. Kameswar Brahma in his book *A Study In the Cultural Heritage Of The Boros* (1998) throw lights on the rich cultural heritage of the Bodos. The book *Bodo-Kacharir Samaj Aru Sanskriti* (2015) by Bhaben Narzi has understanding about Bodo cultural heritage and traditions. It is a book addressing every pros and cons of Boro culture and social customs, is a pioneer in the study of Bodo cultural heritage. *The Mishings of the Brahmaputra Valley* (1981) by Dr. Nomal Pegu is a book, covers a wide range of issues including the origin, migration and cultural life of the Mising. *Mising Sanskritir Patbhumi* (2016) a collection of articles by Nahendra Padun covers each and every aspect of Mising cultural heritage. Jawahar Jyoti Kuli in his book (ed) *The Misings- Their History and Culture*, (2007) discussed about the history, cultural heritage, political developments, social pattern of the Misings of Assam. The edited volume tries to address basically the history and culture of the Misings. The book *Mising Samaj Sanskritir Rengani* (2014) by Pabitra Kumar Pegu is a collection of essays on Mising

Culture and social customs. The book also has a critical understanding on some issues relating to Mising cultural heritage. Significantly in no work study have been done with the proposed objective and within the proposed scope of the work.

Methodology

Research is problem oriented. To fulfill our research objectives specific research methodology needs to be designed. Our present methodology consists of Documents review, Participatory observation and content analysis, open ended interviews with the leaders of civil society and other related organizations. In document Review, taking the stock of secondary information the researcher attempts to evaluate the background of the Bodo and Mising movement. The researcher choose participatory observation and participated in annual sessions, annual conferences, seminars regarding the issue, ethnic festivals organized by the Bodo and Mising organizations (both civil society and political) and tried the issues to be empirically measured. In the content analysis part the researcher has gone through the souvenirs, periodicals, magazines and journals published by different Bodo and Mising organizations.

The methodology for this study is thus multi-dimensional with a focus on qualitative interviews and participatory observation as the main research methods. Most of the leaders of civil society organizations, student organizations, and other related organizations are interviewed. Among them office bearers of Bodo Sahitya Sabha, All Bodo Students Union, Nikhil Bathou Sangathan, Assam Bodo Kachari Jatiya Parishad

(*Asomiya Bhasi*), Mising Agom Kebang, Takam Mising Porin Kebang, Mising Bane Kebang, Mising Dirbi Kebang, Mising Autonomous Council is being interviewed. The interviews were open-ended. The present work is of a qualitative and interpretative nature.

Sources

The study aimed at an in-depth study of the Socio-political movements of the Bodos and the Misings, and the processes of cultural mobilization taking place in these movements. For this purpose the data is collected from both primary sources and the secondary sources.

To achieve our research objectives the sources are gathered from the Books, both parliamentary and legislative assembly debates, National and State Archive, the British records, records preserved by both Bodo and Mising organizations, Articles, Periodicals, Journals and magazines related to the topic, News Papers etc. For this purpose of collecting information the annual conferences and periodical meetings of the literary organizations, student organizations, and other civil society organizations are visited and collect proceedings and souvenirs etc. Major source of information of the present study are gathered from the interviews with present and ex office bearers of both civil society and political organizations leading the Bodo and Mising society. In all cases sources have been scrutinized, compared and analyzed to collect the most rational information preserved therein.

Notes and References:

¹ Misra, U., *The Periphery Strikes Back; Challenges to the Nation state in Assam and Nagaland*. Shimla, Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 2000, p-10.

² Chatterjee, S.K., *Kirata Janakriti*, Calcutta, The Asiatic Society, 1974, pp38-49.

³ J.D Anderson said that “the river names of the whole Brahmaputra Valley are Bodo names, and it is demonstrable that the Bodos are the aborigines of the valley”. Gait in *A History of Assam* wrote that the Kacharies may perhaps be described as the aborigines or earliest known inhabitants of Brahmaputra Valley and in the Brahmaputra Valley the Kacharies call themselves Bodo or Bodo fisa (son of the Bodo).

⁴ Census of India, 2001, Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner.

⁵ Endle, S., *The Kacharies*, New Delhi, Akansha Publishing House, 2012.

⁶ Greison, G.C., *The Linguistic Survey of India*, vol I and III. Part I and II, 1967.

⁷ Cited in P.C Bhattacharya, *A Descriptive Analysis of the Boro Language*, Guwahati University, 1977, p.16.

⁸ Endle, S. Op. cit., p.1

⁹ Chatterjee, S.K., Op. cit., p.38

¹⁰ Ibid., pp.45-46

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Gait, E., *A History of Assam*, Guwahati, EBH Publisher, fourth Indian reprint, 2008, p 299.

¹³ Ibid. pp300-310, also see Sydney.E. Op. cit., pp.5-7.

¹⁴ Endle, S., Op. cit., pp.4-.5.

¹⁵ Bhattacharya, P.C, Op. cit., p 16.

¹⁶ Boro, A., *Folk Literature of the Bodos*, Guwahati, N.L Publications, third edition, 2014, pp3-6.

¹⁷ That there are lots of controversies over the origin and use of the term Kirata. But S.K. Chatterjee puts it “*the term Kirata indicated the non-Aryan tribes living in the mountains, particularly the Himalayas and in the North Eastern areas of India, who were mongoloid in origin. These Kiratas were connected with the Cinas or the Chinese, the Bhotas or the Tibetans and other Mongoloid people.*” (Chatterjee, S.K, opcit, pp.45-46). It seems that the Kirata is a

generic term used by the Aryans to indicate the non Aryans and not a specific term to indicate a particular non-Aryan race.

¹⁸ Gait, E., Op. cit., p. 300

¹⁹ Bhuyan S.K. *Kachari Buranji*, Government of Assam in the Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies, Fourth edition, 2010.

²⁰ Brahma, K., *A Study in Cultural Heritage of the Bodos*, Guwahati Bina Library, 2009, p-13.

²¹ Greison, G.C, *The Linguistic Survey of India*, vol III. Part II, 1967, p1.

²² Ibid.

²³ Endle, S., Op.cit., pp.3-4

²⁴ Here Endle mentioned about a folk popular among the Garos in the distant past their forefathers, i.e. nine headmen, the offspring of a Hindu fakir and a Tibetan woman, came down from the northern mountains, and after a halt at Koch-Behar, made their way to *Jogighopa*, and thence across the Brahmaputra to *Dalgoma* and so finally into the Garo Hills. See Sydney, E. Op. cit., Pp.3-4

²⁵ Chatterjee, S.K, Op. cit., pp.36-37.

²⁶ E. Sydney. Op. cit., p.4.

²⁷ Chatterjee, S.K, Op. cit., p22.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Endle, S. Op. cit., p.71.

³⁰ *Bibar* was the first Bodo magazine published in 1924 as the mouthpiece of the *Bodo Chatra Samilan*, Satish Chandara Basumotary was the editor of the magazine.

³¹ *Alongbar* was published in 1938 and Promod Chandar Brahma was the editor of this magazine.

³² *Juzaini* was the first Bodo novel. Authored by Chittaranjan Moshahary the novel was published in 1962.

³³ The Bodo Shitya Sabha, the premier literary and cultural organization of the Bodo people was established in 1952, aiming at preservation, development of the Bodo language, literature and culture and to unite the Bodo people on these issues.

³⁴ All Bodo Students Union, the students' organization with some core political and socio-cultural demand was formed in February, 1967.

³⁵ Boro, A., Op. cit., p.11.

³⁶ *Kherai* and *Garja Puja* are the most important traditional and religious festivals of the Bodos. The purpose of both the festivals have got link with agriculture. *Kherai Puja* is of four kinds A) The *Darshan Kherai* performed during the first week of the month of *Kati* (from Oct. 15-nov. 15) the moth of and it is meant for *Mainao* or *Lakhmi*, the goddess of wealth. It is also known as *Sali Kherai* as it is connected with winter crop B) *Umrao Kherai*- It is held during the month of *Ashara* (from June. 15-July. 15) for the welfare of villagers as well as the crops. It is also known as *Ashu Kherai* as it connected with *Ashu*, a kind of paddy of rainy season. C) The *Phalo Kherai*- it is performed specially on the day of '*Maghi Purnima*' the full moon of the month of January. D) *Nowaoni Kherai*-this kind of *Kherai* is performed by the family when it deems necessary. The *Garja Puja* is another important religious ceremony of the Bodos. The Bodos perform the *Gajra Puja* to purify themselves and the village after any seasonal festival like *Baisagu* etc. See K. Brahma, op. cit., pp. 110-146.

³⁷ Endle, S. Op. cit., pp.35-36.

³⁸ Sydney Endle in this context wrote that "in a certain stage of spiritual and moral development men are undoubtedly influenced far more by what they fear than by what they love and this truth certainly applies to the Kachari race in the most unqualified way". He said that when a Bodo man prostrate with malarial fever of a virulent type were asked about what is wrong with him, his reply was *modai hamdang*, an (evil) spirit has has hold of me. And this invisible spiritual being, who are the master of sickness, famine, earthquakes etc. must be propitiated and brought off by frequent offerings of rice, plantains, pig, goat, poultry etc. See S,Endle. Op. cit., pp.33-34.

³⁹ Bhattacharya, P.C, Op. cit.

⁴⁰ Kalicharan Brahma (1860-1938) started the *Brahma* Movement in 1907. Kalicharan's intellectual and philosophical conceptions were deeply influenced by Bengal renaissance and more particularly, the socio-religious reformation of Brahma Samaj, which later culminated in the foundation of the Brahma religion. In addition, Sankaradeva's teaching of Vaishnavism remained an integral part of Kalicharan's philosophy.

⁴¹ Brahma, K., Op. cit., p.19.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid., p.20.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p.150.

⁴⁵ Ibid., pp.112-120.

⁴⁶ Boro, A., Op. cit., p.10.

⁴⁷ Brahma, K. Op. cit., p.40.

⁴⁸ Bhattacharya, P.C. Op.cit., p.16.

⁴⁹ Bhandari, J.S., "Ethnohistory, Ethnic Identity and Contemporary Mishing Society," *Indian Anthropologist*, Vol. 14, No 2, 1984, p.88.

⁵⁰ R.B Pemberton in his book the *Eastern Frontier of India* wrote that, 'the Abor occupy the lower ranges extending from the Dihong river to Soobunsiri and the Meeries principally, the plains stretching from the foot of the Abor Hills upto the right or northern bank of the Brahampooter.' (Pemberton 1835:78). E.T. Delton observed 'there was no material difference between the Abors and Meris. They are evidently of common origin and Daflas are of same race.(Dalton 1845:426). Hunter (1879:288) in his statistical account of Assam also wrote that the Misings of the plains were an offshoot from the Padam-Miyong. Mackenzie (1884:33) wrote 'Abors and Mirris undoubtedly came from the same habitat and they are so alike in all material respects...' Col. Shakespeare(1914:109) in his work History of Upper Assam wrote ' the Mirris dwelling between the Dapla and Abors are allied to the latter and are so alike that it seems evident they both came from the same original home whatever that was.'

⁵¹ Hamilton 1912, Cited in J. S., Bhandari, Op. cit., p.90.

⁵² Cited in J. S., Bhandari, Op. cit., p.90.

⁵³ Cited in D. Nath, "The Misings in the History of Assam", in J.J. Kuli, (ed), *The Misings: Their History and Culture*, North East Printers, 1998, p.11.

⁵⁴ The great vaishnava saint, socio-cultural and religious reformer of Assam.

⁵⁵ Neog, M., Guwahati *Sankardeva and his time*, 1965, p.75.

⁵⁶ Disciple of Sankardeva and another great socio-cultural and religious reformer of Assam.

⁵⁷ Nath, D., Op.cit. p.38.

⁵⁸ Chutiya is an indigenous ethnic group scattered in different parts of Assam. The Chutiya kingdom was established by Birpal in 1187 in northeastern Assam with the capital at Sadiya. The Ahom overpowered the Chutiya king in 16th century.

⁵⁹ Gait, E., Op.cit., p. 85.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ The Miri Sandikoi played a commendable role in collecting secret information from important officials of Ram Singh. See H.C. Goswami, (ed)., *Purani Asam Buranji*. Guwahati, 1977, p.110.

⁶² Devi, L., Guwahati *Ahom Tribal Relations*, 1968, p.159.

⁶³ Asiatic Researches (Voll.II), p.131.

⁶⁴ Based on the recommendation made by Indian Statutory Commission, 1930 (popularly known as Simon Commission) by an order of 1936 the Govt of British India categorized the backward tracts as “Excluded and Partially Excluded Areas” as 1. Excluded areas- North East Frontier (Sadiya, Balipara and Lakhimpur tracts), The Naga Hills Districts, The Lushai Hills Districts, The North Cachar Hills sub-division and Cachar district. 2. Partially Excluded Areas- The Garo Hills Districts, The Mikir Hills in Nagaon and Sibsagar District, The British portion of Khasi and Jaintia Hills district (other than the Shillong municipality and the cantonment).

⁶⁵ Taid. T.R, “A brief note on the Mising Language” in J.J Kuli, op. cit., 2012, p.138.

⁶⁶ Tabu Ram Taid is the founder President of Mising Aom Kebang (Mising Literary Association)

⁶⁷ William Robinson was an American Baptist Missionaries and a frontline academician of 19th century Assam. He was also the author of “Notes on the Daflas and the peculiarities of their language”.

⁶⁸ Journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal, Vol.18, part 1, p.224.

⁶⁹ Joseph Francis Needhan was the Assistant Political Officer at Sadiya from 1882 to 1905

⁷⁰ Pegu, P., “Christian Missionary Works on Mising Language” in J.J. Kuli, Op. cit., 1998, pp. 159-161.

⁷¹ Nahendra Padun is the founder Secretary of Mising Agom Kebang (Mising Literary Association)

⁷² Excerpts from personal interview with T.R. Taid and N. Padun, founder president and secretary of Mising Agom Kebang.

⁷³ Mising Agom Kebang is the highest literary body of the Misings of Assam. It was established in 1972 with Tabu Ram Taid and Nahendra Padun as the founder president and secretary respectively. Mising Agom Kebang is a non-political voluntary organization, dedicated to the cause of preservation and development of Mising language and literature.

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- ⁷⁴ Excerpts Personal interview with T.R. Taid on 16th July, 2015, founder president of Mising Agom Kebang.
- ⁷⁵ Pegu, L.N., “Religion and Society in North East India” in J.J. Kuli, Op. cit., pp.138-139.
- ⁷⁶ Elwin, V., *A Philosophy for NEFA*, 1959.
- ⁷⁷ Pegu, N. *The Misings of the Brahmaputra Valley*, second revised edition, published by the Author, 2011, p.140.
- ⁷⁸ Dutta, B.N., *Cultural Contours of North East India*, Oxford University Press, 2012, pp.78-79.
- ⁷⁹ Pegu, N., Op. cit., p.141.
- ⁸⁰ Pegu. L.N.,Op. cit., pp. 138-139.
- ⁸¹Elwin, V., *Myth of N.E. Frontier of India* , 1958.
- ⁸²Mipun, J., *The Mishings (Miris) of Assam: Development of a new life style*, New Delhi, Gyan Publishing House, Reprint, 2012, pp.25-26.
- ⁸³ *Po:rag*, *Ali Ai Ligang* and *Taleng Uyu* are the *pujas* cum festivals concerned with agriculture, *Dabur*, *Asi Uyu*, *Yummrang Uyu* are the *pujas* concerned with deceases, and *Dodgang*, and *Urum Apin* are kind of worship for the ancestors.
- ⁸⁴ Pegu, N., Op.cit., pp.70-73.
- ⁸⁵ Doley, B.K., “Quest For Identity and Autonomy Among the Misings in Quest for Identity” in C.J Sonowal (ed.), *Autonomy and Development*, Akansha Publishing House, 2010, pp.441-444.
- ⁸⁶ Pegu, N., Op. cit., pp.83-86.
- ⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p.86.
- ⁸⁸ Padun, N., *Mising Sanskriti*, Mising Agom Kebang, 2016, p. 15.
- ⁸⁹ Mipun, J., Op. cit., p.27.
- ⁹⁰ *Ibid.*
- ⁹¹ Pegu, N., Op. cit., p.89-91.
- ⁹² Padun, N., Op. cit., p.16.
- ⁹³ Mipun J., Op. cit., p.26.
- ⁹⁴ Padun,N., Op. cit., p.16.
- ⁹⁵ Mipun, J., Op. cit., pp.26-27.
- ⁹⁶ Padun,N., Op. cit., p.11.
- ⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.11.

⁹⁸ Ibid., p.12.

⁹⁹ Pegu, N., Op. cit., p.78.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., pp.133-134.

¹⁰² Ibid., pp.133-134.

¹⁰³ Endle, S., Op.cit., p.71.