

## CHAPTER- IV

### DEFINING AND REDIFINING CULTURE IN THE BODO AND THE MISING MOVEMENT: CULTURE AS A FORCE OF MOBILISATION

#### *Religion, Social Customs, Dress Code and others*

The use of religion with vested interest and with evil intensions has made it the prime factor of spreading hatred among people in many parts of the present day world. But at the same time, religion can be a means of mass mobilisation and device of organising people for a good reason also. Though in a general manner, religion is considered as an exclusive private matter, but close observation reveals the fact that religion plays the role of a determinant of various social transactions too. While discussing the relationship between state, society and religion, S.K. Mitra observed that '*religion provides the moral basis of state's authority, as well as an institutional and metaphysical structure for social transactions.*'<sup>1</sup>

It is said that '*religions by and large, tend to accommodate their ethical codes to existing social circumstances. It may, then, happen that a religion or certain aspects of a religion become popular as they adjust better to the changes in the economic and social order. This is what Marx said in 1867 with respect to Christianity, but specially its bourgeois developments, Protestantism, Deism, & c. as being more suited to the conditions of rising capitalism*'<sup>2</sup>. In this context Marxist aphorism 'religion is the sigh

of oppressed creatures, the heart of a heartless world, just as it is the spirit of spiritless situation. It is the opium of the people'<sup>3</sup> sees economic transaction as the driving force of history, has importance. Despite the postulation that religion is an epiphenomenon of an exploitative economic structure works as an instrument of smooth exploitation, its role to organise people, to fight against the exploitative social order is now widely recognised. Religion is seen by Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937) to have a direct relationship to the socialist revolution and to revolutionary forms in general. For Gramsci "production is both physical and mental. Consequently, the resultant so called 'material infrastructure' and 'cultural superstructure' of societal institution one so often meets in Marxist sociology or seen by him as co-determining in a dialectical sense, rather than the former determining the later. He develops his thoughts along these lines precisely because he accepts that the simplistic theory of bloody revolution which a number of his contemporaries supported is doomed to failure<sup>4</sup>."

In any event religion is always a political force. In the context of the relationship between religion, politics and social change Max Weber's (1864-1920) *The Protestant Ethic and Spirit Capitalism* (1905) says that the protestant ethic was an important force behind the development of capitalism in northern Europe. Rebert N. Bellah (1927-2013) in his *Tokugawa Religion: The Values of Pre-Industrial Japan* (1957) however demonstrated that it was not only Protestantism that helped capitalism grows but religions in other social context too possessed such potentiality<sup>5</sup>.

With regard to the role of religion and resistance to colonial rule in India, there can be no doubt that before the rise of modern Indian national movement, religion

played a certain role in arousing defiance of British rule under adverse conditions. Rajat K. Ray argued in his detailed and insightful study of '*The mentality of the Mutiny*' that the recourse to religion in 1857 was inevitable in view of the lack of development yet of the idea of the nation<sup>6</sup>. Again, the invocation of religion by Bal Gangadhar Tilak or in *Khilafat* agitation was naturally important in early nationalist mobilisation<sup>7</sup>. Religion is being used widely as a mobilising force in the whole world. In this context, the religious revivalism by the Bodos and the Misings has importance. Besides, as a natural tendency to revive the religious beliefs by the Bodos and the Misings, in the mobilising process of both the ethnic groups religion works as a strong underlying force. It is seen that, the Bodos and the Misings have been trying to unite members of their respective communities on the basis of religious beliefs, who were fragmented on the same ground.

### **Religious Revivalism among the Bodos**

It has already been discussed about the religion of the Bodos in the first chapter of this work. The traditional religion of the Bodos which is current among them since time immemorial is invariably lined up with the worship of *Bathow brai* or *Sibrai*, the supreme god of the Bodos. After the name of the supreme god *Bathow brai* their religion is known as *Bathow* religion<sup>8</sup>. According to P.C. Bhattacharya '*the Bodos of the northern bank of the Brahmaputra valley narrate their origin of creation in relation to the worship of Bathow. Bathow represents the five basic elements of creation. He is also known as Sibrai (Siva). Bathow or Sibrai with his wife created this*

universe. *Bathow* created the *sizu* plant (*Euphorbia Splendens*), the first tree which stands as an emblem of the supreme god in altar<sup>9</sup>.

It is worth to mention that traditional religion of the Bodos is worshipping the God *Bathow*. But time has brought many changes to the religious traditions of the Bodos. Especially, in the beginning of the nineteenth century, various discords and disorders took place among the Bodos regarding the issue of religion. As a result of constant supervision and efforts of the Christian Missionaries many tribal people went through the process of conversion. A section of the Bodos too showed the tendency to convert to Christianity and a large number of Bodos accept Christianity within a short span of time. At the same time, another group of people got attracted towards Hinduism rather than their traditional way of worship. This group especially went to take *sarana* from the *gossains* of the *satra* institution. By taking *sarana* to the vaishnavite *gossains* they started identifying themselves as *saraniya* and started considering themselves as more pure than the others. Regarding the rise of *Saraniyas* among the Bodos Bhabendra Narzi states “A few Bodo-Kacharis are disciples of some Aryan *Goswami gurus*. They received ‘initiation *mantras*’ from such gurus and became popular as *Saranya*. They considered themselves as ‘pure’ from the day they were initiated. They discarded their traditional language and culture and started to speak in Assamese.”<sup>10</sup> Hence, in this period a large number of Bodos either became Christians or Hindus and the rest continued to carry forward their traditional *Bathow* worshipping. This religious division acts as hindrance of unity among all sections of the Bodo people and the fact became distinct soon. The religious difference posed as a

big challenge to all Bodos to come forward to tackle various common problems. It is worth to mention that the conflict between the Christian Bodos and the other Bodo groups took an unexpected turn later. The bitterness was evident while efforts were going on to solve the script issue during the Bodo Movement and on various occasions.

Regarding the religious divisions among Bodos Bhabendra Narzi says, “The Bodos or the Bodo-Kacharis are permanent settlers of the Brahmaputra Valley, North Bengal, Cachar district, Tripura and South Nepal. It is seen that they have accepted many religions as Christianity, *Brahma*, *Sarania Kachari* and some became *Sarukoch* from *Sarania* etc. Those who became Christians now follow the Christian way of life. Though they use the ancient Bodo-Kachari language, but they no longer follow the traditional beliefs and rituals of the Bodos. They sing folk and prayer songs in Missionary taught English tunes. They use all ancient musical instruments of Bodos except the *Kham Madal*<sup>11</sup>’.

One of the main reasons of the religious divisions in the Bodo society was the process of assimilation of the Bodos to the Assamese formation. Analysing the position of the Bodos in Assamese formation M.S. Prabhakara wrote-‘it is doubtful that Bodos were really considered part of Assamese society while they remained Bodos. Their acceptance into the Assamese society was dependent on their acceptance of Hinduism, which also meant, in course of a few generations the loss of the native speech and the adoption of Assamese language. Those who remained outside Hindu caste order remained ‘*Kacharis*’ a term which at least in private conversation among

caste Hindu Assamese, continues to have traditional pejorative connotations.<sup>12</sup> The history of the assimilation of the Bodos and of many tribal peoples into Assamese formation provides one of the most dramatic examples of how Indic civilisation of India's north eastern periphery managed to recruit converts from the primitive peoples, and of the continuity between caste and the supposed 'primitive isolates'-the tribes.<sup>13</sup> It is mentionable that due to the practice of *Bathowism*, like consumption of pork, chicken and brewing and drinking *zou* and *zumai*, the upper caste Hindus often relegated these tribal groups to a somewhat subservient ranking in the socio- cultural hierarchy.<sup>14</sup> In the cultural trend of differentiation among the Bodos today are those in the realm of religious practices. There is a revival of the worship of *Bathow* as the supreme god. *Bathow puja* has become the most common form of religion-especially noticeable among the educated sections, who have returned to the practice. The courtyards of many Bodo families have an altar of *Bathow*. While the intent to differentiate from the Assamese vaishnavite Hindu practices is apparent, the relationship of Bodo traditional religion to Saivite and Shakta Hinduism however is more complex. For the history of Bodo interaction Hindu culture precedes the conversation of Bodos under the vaishnava *gosains* since the sixteen century. Some Bodos refer their deity *Bathow* as name of Hindu god Shiva.<sup>15</sup> In this regard Mongalsing Hajowari clearly states that *Bathow* is the creator of the entire universe. *Bathow* is not a transformed version of *Shiva-Parvati*. Instead, *Bathow* Himself is the creator of *Shiva-Parvati*.

## **The Brahma Movement and Religious Revivalism**

The overall impact of the religious divisions among the Bodos in the 19<sup>th</sup> century was a negative one for the existence of the community. In this environment when the Bodos almost drifted apart from each other on the pretext of religion, Kalicharan Brahma (1860-1938) started the *Brahma* Movement in 1907. The movement worked as a positive catalyst in unity of the Bodos. It tried to bring Bodo people together under a particular religious doctrine that was otherwise divided in the name of religion. Rather than calling it only a religious movement, we should consider the *Brahma* Movement as a socio-economic reform movement. 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<sup>16</sup>.

It is noteworthy that the reform centric socio-cultural as well as religious *Brahma* Movement initiated by Kalicharan Brahma emerged as a strong pillar of unifying process of the Bodos. The socio-economic reformist activities of the movement paved a new way for Bodo people. The religious side of the movement brought the Bodos together. The entire activities of the Brahma Movement immensely attracted the Bodos. Within a very short period of time a large number of Bodo people started to accept and use the surname *Brahma* as a sign of faith and loyalty to '*Brahma Dharma*'.

Regarding '*Brahma Dharma*', Narzi comments, "Aryasamaji Kalicharan Brahmachari propagated *Brahma Dharma* among the Bodos. The Bodo-Kacharis initiated to this *dharma* are found in Goalpara, Kamrup, Darrang, Nagaon, the Mikir Hills and Lakhimpur district etc. The *Brahmas* follow the same ancient language and ways of expression of the Bodos. The items and elements used by the Bodos-Kacharis as a part of their culture are used by the Bodo-Kacharis who initiated *Brahma* too. But on the occasions like marriage, birth, death and some other social functions they offer *Hom Jagya*, unlike their traditional system of worshipping. They do not perform *pujas* or rituals to satisfy any God or Goddess or cast away evils like the traditional beliefs of the Bodos. The *Brahmas* too offer '*Kherai*' to celebrate the *Kherai* festival. But they stay away from the rituals of sacrifice which is customary to the Bodos. Instead, the *Brahmas* offer '*prasadas*', fruits and flowers during their worship. The *mantras* used during the *puja* or worshipping ceremonies are same as followed by the Bodo-Kacharis. Most of the *Brahma Dharma* initiated Bodos are spiritual in nature."<sup>17</sup>

The *Brahma* Movement by Kalicharan Brahma not only strengthen the socio-economic base of the Bodos through their various reform programmes, but gave them a single 'religious ideology' too which united the Bodos otherwise separated by religion. This reformist movement had a far reaching effect on the Bodo society as it brought the Bodo society into the wider contract with the outside world and gradually generated a level of consciousness among them in terms of their ethnic identity. All these positive attributes of the movement paved the way for the Bodos to move forward in an organised manner.



It has already been discussed that the religious reform programme guided by Kalicaharan Brahman provided a 'religious ideology' to the Bodos which strengthen their socio-cultural foundation. Eventually, the Bodos started to think about new ideas. It has already discussed in chapter II and III of this work that during this particular period of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, tribals in Assam started to voice their dissatisfaction on various issues. They started detaching themselves from the Assamese formation and started to establish their individual identity. The Bodo was the main tribal group among the plain tribes of Assam to start a movement for their separate identity. Religious unity among the Bodos was the most essential requirement at that time. Bodo leaders did not lag behind in this task. The Brahma Movement and other religious activities that followed the movement were clear proof of it.

### **Nikhil Bathow Mahasabha and Religious Revivalism**

In the process of organising the Bodos on the basis of religion and fighting for common issues of the society, Nikhil Bathow Mahasabha (All Bathow Confederation), the religious organisation, established in the early 90s has great importance.<sup>18</sup> Nikhil Bathow Mahasabha was formally established on 16 May 1992. The main aim of the *Mahasabha* was to unite the Bodos on religious ground. Rupnath Basumatary was the first president of the *Mahasabha*. Baneswar Basumatary and Mangalsing Hajowari were general secretary and chief organising secretary of the Mahasabha respectively. With an aim to reach all the Bodo people living in every corner of the state and to organise them on religious ground the objectives of the Mahasabha are<sup>19</sup>-

1. Conservation, transmission and publicity of the thousand years old *Bathow* religion among of the Bodos of the different parts of the country.
2. Revival of extinct or nearly extinct rite and rituals related to *Bathow* religion. Establishing *Bathow* as a reformed religion by eliminating religious superstitions and social evils.
3. Carrying the main teachings of the *Bathow* to the mass.
4. Establishing *Bathow* religion among religiously multi-diverged and geographically scattered Bodo people and unite them.

It is worth to mention that the 1992 born organisation has built a strong organisational foundation for itself. It has taken many steps to spread *Bathow* religion among the Bodo public through various meetings and conferences. Its grassroots level organisation 'Anchalik Bathow Sangathan' has been playing the most influential role in this regard. These organisations arrange discussions, meetings or conferences in their respective areas to highlight the original religion of the Bodos, i.e. the *Bathow*. They also focused its significance and glory, the importance of discarding evil practices and tradition from the society and religious unity etc. The organisation goes beyond its religious periphery and takes various social problems of the society for discussion and come out with solutions too. Another main topic of discussion hold by the organisation in various levels is the religious unification of the Bodo society.

It is an interesting fact that conversion to *Bathow* religion of many practitioners of other religions during meetings organised by the *Bathow Sangathan* have become a regular phenomenon. One such example is the meeting organised by Marigaon

Anchalik Bathow Sangathan on 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> December 2016. After the opening ceremony, fifteen families who had been practicing religion like *Brahma Dharma*, *Satsang* and *Krishna Guru* again embraced *Bathow* publicly<sup>20</sup>.

Religion plays an important role to organise people of all strata of a particular community so that they can move together to solve their common problems. It is noticed that Bodo people from all walks of life have actively come forward to preserve and revive their religious rites-rituals and tradition. Analysing the situation Mongalsing Hazowari remarks<sup>21</sup>

Though the Bodo-Kacharis living in various regions of Assam, speak different languages, yet they all can be proud of the fact that they all are believers of the Bathow rituals and tradition. Bathow is not only a religion, but a civilization, a culture as well. The Bodo-Kacharis of all over Assam may speak different language, they may practice Krishna Guru, Satsanga or Shankari philosophies, but they have been following Bathow as their common culture. Own religion, own tribe and own culture are inseparable entities. It is the pious duty of every individual to keep alive one's own religion, own tribe and own culture. Therefore, the Bodo-Kacharis of all strata should come forward to follow their own religion-Bathow.

A continuous process has been going on among the Bodo-Kacharis to revive the religious tradition and mobilising people on the basis of religion. Many politically motivated organisations along with the religion based organisations like Nikhil Bathow Mahasabha have been playing active roles in this regard. 'Asom Bodo-Kachari Jatiya Parisad (*Asomiya Bhasi*)' is another organisation which works to

revive, preserve and enrich the ethnic existence, language, art and culture of the Bodo-Kacharis (who speak Assamese) living outside the BTC areas. In this regard, celebration of its foundation day as the '*Siju* Day' by 'Asom Bodo-Kachari Jatiya Parisad' which was established to ensure the overall development of the community in educational, socio-economic and spiritual field has significance<sup>22</sup>.

As mentioned earlier, the organisation has been working for the overall development of the Bodo-Kacharis living outside the BTC area. The same organisation has been demanding the formation of the 'Boro-Kachari Autonomous Council' under the Indian Constitutional perimeter to ensure all round development of the Bodo-Kacharis<sup>23</sup>. They explain the reason behind celebrating their foundation day as the '*Siju* Day'<sup>24</sup>-“The *Siju* plant is a treasure of national life of the Bodo-Kacharis. This national plant bears spiritual and historical significance. The *Siju* is the symbol of the main God Shiva as believed by the Bodo-Kacharis, all spiritual rituals are conducted under the plant from ancient time. People listen to religious sermon, remember their rich tradition and play homage to Lord Shiva under the *Siju* plant. People regarded the plant as a benevolent God and pray to it for unity, peace, harmony and well-being. Honouring the relationship of the *Siju* plant with the history, religion and society of the Bodo-Kacharis, 'Asom Bodo-Kachari Jatiya Parishad' has decided to celebrate its foundation day as the '*Siju* Day'. Interestingly the mouthpiece of this organisation is also named as '*Siju*'.

It is already discussed in the Chapter III that it became very essential to differentiate these cultural elements from Assamese and establish them separately to

revive the cultural heritage of the Bodo-Kacharis and to organise them on the basis of their heritage. The same differentiation is clear in the revival process of religious rules and rituals as well as tradition. Among practices of Bodos today that underline the urge to differentiate from the Assamese is a preference for burial over cremation. It is noteworthy that *Bodofa* Upendra Nath Brahma was buried and not cremated. Referring to the explanation of a Bodo activist regarding Upendra Nath Brahma's cremation Sanjib Baruah noted—"the activist explained that the practice had stopped as a result of Assamization. *Bodofa* Upendra Nath Brahma wanted Bodo people to return to the practice of burying the dead and willed a burial for himself. According to the activist burials even have an additional advantage, it will ensure that our bones will tell future generations about us."<sup>25</sup> Though there has been a continuous process going on regarding revival of burial, but practically there are differences in opinion regarding the last rites among the Bodos. According to Narzi, the Bodos too maintained a separate crematorium as the Assamese Varna Hindus. But in most of the times dead bodies were not burnt on pyre in those crematoriums. Performing last rites on a pyre was a rare event. Many people expressed their desire of how to be cremated and generally relatives obeyed the wish of the dead. Some used to abandon the dead body in the crematorium. It was believed that people get salvation from sins if their dead bodies are savoured by carcase eating species like crow, the vulture and the fox<sup>26</sup>.

### **Revivalism of the Mising Religious Beliefs**

Like Bodos, there are many religious divisions among the Misings too. The Misings now a day do not follow only one religious tradition. Rather, they are

followers of *Kewalia* or *Kal Saghati* sect of neo-vaishnavism, *Bhagawatiya* or *Mahapurushiya* sect, *Anukul Thakur* sect and Christianity to name a few. Followers of *Anukul Thakur* and Christianity are very few in numbers. But there is no denial that the conversion process is still active within the community. Such types of differences in the Mising community have caused hurdle in moving forward in an organised manner to achieve a particular social-economic and political goal.

Regarding the issue Mising Bane Kebang states clearly “the traditional religious customs of the Misings have become weak due to the impact of various discrete beliefs. The Misings have divided themselves religiously by embracing these beliefs. There is no more spiritual originality in the community. The more the Misings drift away from the spiritual beliefs of the *Tani* origin, the more they suffer spiritual chaos. More than one spiritual entity has made the Misings directionless. A nation should be confident, energized and encouraged by its own spiritual power; this power plays a vital role in the upliftment of the nation. Clans of the greater *Tani* family and the *Galos* debate the issue. But their spiritual self is far more orderly than the Misings. They have spiritualised their entity. This might have the reason why they are more organised than us”<sup>27</sup>.

The Misings believe that all beings and things of the universe have been created by a supernatural power or a creator. Animals and plants, river and mountains are no exception to this rule. Thus, animism, animatism and supernaturalism come to be basic ingredients of Mising religion. The Misings believe in the existence of a super

natural being, which is all powerful, omnipotent and omnipresent. He is called Donyi Polo and hence, traditional religion of the Mising is known as *Donyi Poloism*<sup>28</sup>.

The traditional religious belief of the Misings is '*Donyi-Polo*'. But the traditional belief underwent many changes as soon as the Misings started to move to the plains to settle. Now-a-days, like the Bodos, the Misings too follow different religious sects and belief systems. The present religion of Mising is the synthetic product of animism and Hinduism. The religion among them is known as *Kewaliya* or *Nishamoliya*. In spite of the mixture, they are worshipper of *Uyu* or spirit<sup>29</sup>. Although the Mising maintain their traditional beliefs about supernatural being and other customary practices related to birth and death. Misings have adopted a lot of beliefs and customs from different forms of Hinduism prevalent in Assam in the past. Therefore, at present the religion of Mising is not a unified body of beliefs and practices as it used to be in the past<sup>30</sup>.

Diversion from traditional religious belief and acceptance of Hindu religious sects and rituals by the Misings is not an immediate process. It is a long process influenced by many factors. The most important influence was from neo-vaishnavite movement of Sankaradeva. Whatever may the factor be, it is true that the Misings have lost a significant portion of their traditional religious beliefs with the growing acceptance of various rules and rituals of Hindu religion.

Off late Christianity too is successful to make an impact on the Misings. It is found that a small number of Mising families residing in Majuli, Gogamukh and

Dhakuakhana have discarded their traditional religion to embrace Christianity. There are three main factors behind this conversion of Mising families in these areas.

1. The development of Brahmonical elements in the *satra* system in the post-Sankaradeva period irritated the Misings. The rigid caste system maintained by the *satras* developed dissatisfaction among the Misings and as a result they were attracted to Christianity which was in a more liberal attitude. According to Padma Pegu, Baptist Christian convert of 1986 and a teacher ‘discriminations against the Misings by the *satras* is what prompted me to accept Christianity.’<sup>31</sup>
2. The second factor was the welfare programmes conducted by the Christian Missionaries. With their welfare activities, they were able to become closer to the people. Because of lack of education and consciousness among the Misings and they have been facing various social problems, superstitions and social taboos. Therefore, the reformist programmes initiated by the Missionaries received desired attention from the community. The dedicated service of especially Catholic Missionaries, through education and the care of sick and suffering, the sympathy and assistance in the times of distress, has played a great role.
3. Besides, a few privileged Misings who got the opportunity to receive education in English medium embraced Christianity because of a general trend of westernisation.

It is an obvious fact that the religious differences among the Misings have posed as a hurdle in the path of their unity for a common socio-political and economic goal.



The gradual process of conversion among the Misings brings a threat to the unique cultural heritage of the community too. The religious differences bar them to unite and organise to move forward to achieve their common objectives. Bane Kebang clearly expresses its view regarding the matter, “A nation needs her own set of religious beliefs to establish an identity with special characteristics.....we cannot ignore the relevance of religion while initiating discussions on national existence”<sup>32</sup>.

Mising Bane Kebang feels that the religious differences have divided the Misings in political and social fields too. Hence, the Kebang has put utmost importance to find a solution to remove the barriers of these differences. The Kebang and other Mising ethnic organisations have given importance to the following points off late-

1. To find a way to remove religious differences among the community members.
2. To revive the traditional religious practice and culture.
3. To mobilise the people of the Mising community on the basis of the revived traditional practice and culture and to move forward united to solve all socio-economic as well as political problems of the community.

Religious reformation is a necessity for development of the tribal societies and more so in case of the Misings who waste considerable amount of labour, time and materials in connection with religious functions has therefore, come to evolve a system which will re-enforce the solidarity of the Mising society in terms of socio-cultural identity. It is noteworthy that the thought or activities of revival of traditional

religious practice was new and a recent development to the Misings. The thought began to get importance from the beginning of the current century. Most of the Mising organisations agree with the fact that the religious differences have divided the society and posed as a barrier of solving the socio-economic as well as political problems of the community. They also share the view that revival of the traditional religious beliefs is the precondition of preserving the uniqueness of the Misings. But all the organisations are unable to provide a suitable and clear way of making the revival process a reality. Even the Gogamukh Declaration<sup>33</sup> of Mising Bane Kebang too could not provide a clear vision regarding the issue. But the Declaration asserted the importance of revival of the *Tani* origin religious tradition of the Misings.

### **Mising Religious Revivalism and the *Donyi Polo* Faith**

It has been already mentioned in the first chapter that the primordial deity of the Mising is *Donyi Polo- Donyi*, the sun god and *Polo*, the moon god. Treated as the supreme deity responsible for all creations and their maintenance, it has now been formed into a symbol of the tribal religious belief in Arunachal Pradesh and Assam belonging to the *Tani* groups of which the Misings are one such group.

The cult of worshipping the sun and the moon (*Dnyi-Polo*) come from the Adis of Arunachal Pradesh. The Adis believe that life on earth has come possible due to the presence of these celestial bodies. As such people invoke the blessings of the *Donyi-Polo* by looking up to the sky and remaining grateful to them for the warmth and rays they transmit equally to the all flora and fauna on the earth. The *Adis* believe that all beings of the Earth have been created by a supernatural power or creator is called *Sedi*

by the Padam tribe, *Mujongs* and *Jimi*, by the *Galos*. It is believed that in the process of evolution of Sedi, the creator himself transformed parts of his body into rivers, valleys, air, water, rocks, stone, flora, fauna, the sun, the moon and the stars. *Sedis* hair was transformed into vegetation in the Earth, his ters into rain and water, his bones into rocks and stones, and his two eyes into *Donyi*, the sun and *Polo*, the moon. Hence, *Donyi* and *Polo*, the manifestation of the two eyes is Sedi, is regarded as the symbol of the creator and protector of mankind. According to the *Galo myths*, *Jimi* is the creator of the entire universe including the *Melo* and the *Sedi*. Out of the union of *Melo* and *Sedi* all things and beings on the earth and in the sky, including the *Donyi* and *Polo* were born.<sup>34</sup>

Being regarded as the supreme deities *Donyi-Polo* has been in the recent decades formed into a new and independent cult of the *Tani* group of the tribes<sup>35</sup> of Arunachal Pradesh and Assam. Two reasons, firstly the pressure of conversion laid upon by Christianity and Hinduism in an organised manner and secondly, the limitations there in traditional religious systems are identified as the basic causes of construction a new cult called *Dony-Polo*. Because of the long standing process of Hindu assertion and appropriation of the tribal cultures and conversion to Christianity among the tribes, their socio-cultural identity went on verge. Therefore, to protect their own socio cultural identity and for protection of their faith system the younger generation of *Adis* created the ethnic religion *Donyi-Polo*, based on their traditional belief system with a pro Hindu and anti-Christian in structure and objectives. The process of identification and establishment of traditional belief system and protection

of indigenous culture got a concrete shape in 1968 as of the meeting of few intellectuals from among Adis at Along, west Siang on 28<sup>th</sup> August of this year consider the means for forming ‘a larger socio-religious association for forging a larger identity’ and thus the journey of *Dony-Poloism* started. Talom Rukbo the central figure emerged as the father of *Dony-Poloism*. With the aim of recovering endangered rituals, prayers and hymns, within 1986 three major cultural organisations were founded the *Tani Jagriti Foundation*, the *Donyi Polo* youth Federation and *Donyi Polo Yelam Kebang*. The 31<sup>st</sup> December, that day of establishment of *Donyi Polo Yelam Kebang* in 1986 has been made the ‘*Donyi Polo Day*’, celebrated each year. People of Arunachal Pradesh consider him almost as the maker of modern society in Arunachal Pradesh. The organising and care-taker body of the *Donyi-Polo* is called *Donyi Polo Yalem Kebang*<sup>36</sup>. The *Ganggin*, where people get together, organise prayer, organise meetings, and for discussions on matters relating to social and cultural life and many other subjects is the centre of all activities of the *Donyi-Polo* system<sup>37</sup>. The *Dony-Polo* movement got its organised shape in 1986 as in this particular year *Donyi Polo Yalem Kebang*, the basic organisation of *Donyi-poloism* was established and a constitution was formulated based on the tireless effort of Talom Rukbo.

The doctrines of the Dony-Polo religion as established by the constitution and forwarded by its father Talom Rukbo

- *Dony-Polo* is the supreme governing power of the universe.
- It is Almighty, omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent.
- It is the supreme judge of highest court following the eternal law.

- It is the source of the life and energy of living beings.
  - It is the divine light, wisdom and knowledge, truth and brotherhood.
  - All living and non-living beings are creation of *Dony-Polo*.
  - Purity, openness, truthfulness, love and peaceful coexistence are eternal laws.
  - Right, justice, kindness is the path of *Donyi Polo*.
  - Sense of equality, fraternity, self respect and self reliance are the equalities and qualification of a person to be a member of the faith.
  - Mercy, apology with understanding is divine qualities of *Donyi-Polo* faith.
  - Theft, lies, hatred are against the ethics of the *Donyi-Polo* faith.
- These are sources of sinfulness.

### ***Donyi-Polo* religion among the Misings of Assam**

The *Dony-Polo* system first emerged in Jonai in Assam in 1996 when a few people formed the *Donyi Polo Yelam Kebang* in that year and started spreading the ideals and teachings of the *Donyi Polo* religion among the Misings of Assam. Starting its journey at Jonai it expanded its branches in different Mising inhabited places including Silapothar, Dhemaji, Gogamukh, Lakhimpur, Majuli and other places. The *Donyi Polo* movement among the Misings of Assam went on an organised shape in 2003, as in this particular year *Donyi Polo Yelam Kebang, Asom*, was established in Silapathar of Dhemaji district. It was followed by the establishment of *Donyi Polo Cultural Research Centre* by some Mising intellectuals has impact on the whole

process<sup>38</sup>. *Donyi Polo* cult entered into Majuli, another heartland of the Mising habitation and culture in 2006 as in that particular year a committee was formed in Majuli to propagate the sect under the leadership of Susen Paw, the then deputy commissioner at Pasighat in Arunachal Pradesh. According to Abani Kumar Pegu, its present chair person, the sect has gradually becoming more and more popular in Majuli, and it has also acted as a check against the growing influence of Christianity among the Misings of Majuli<sup>39</sup>. It is seen that the *Dony Poloism* have been getting gradual popularity among the Misings of Jonai, Silapathar and Dhmaji besides Majuli.

It can be said that the recent '*Donyi Polo Movement*' is the main force which started the very first process of reviving the *Tani* origin religious beliefs among the Misings and unifying them on the basis of the aforesaid belief. But the '*Donyi Polo Movement*' is not received equally by all strata of the community. The eminent Mising intellectual T.R. Taid has termed the movement as "*an elite exercise irrelevant to the traditional Mising religious heritage which cannot reach the common people*"<sup>40</sup> Former president of Mising Agom Kebang, J.J. Kuli also expressed the view that those who adopted Hindu religious beliefs by going through a long process of assimilation cannot be called upon to embrace the *Donyi Polo* religious faith formally<sup>41</sup>. Though Mising Bane Kebang distances itself to clarify its stand on the issue of whether people formally should accept the *Donyi-Polo* faith or not, Kebang's secretary Girin Morang personally feels that Mising people of all classes should embrace *Donyi-Polo* faith as it is an important task to protect as well as propagate the unique cultural heritage of the community<sup>42</sup>.

The emergence of *Donyi Polo* religious system is significant development in the religious and cultural history of the Misings. Being motivated against the incoming Christianity providing all sorts of modern facilities including education, health and sanitation and growing assertion of the Brahminical religions as an all embracing religious faith, the *Donyi-Poloism* has a scope to provide the Misings a religious identity based on traditional belief system and has the scope to organise its people on religious basis. Though, till now, the *Donyi-Polo* faith is not all accepted faith among the Misings of Assam or not received equally by all strata of the society, yet it gets success to attract a small section of Mising people and some have accepted the faith formally.

### **Revival and Use of Ethnic Attire and Ethnic Cuisines**

In all the movements of self assertion, use of ethnic attire has become a common phenomenon. While to protect the uniqueness of attires of a particular ethnic group is a part of natural process, at the same time, its use as a mobilising factor in self assertion movements becoming a regular phenomena. It is seen that in the post-independent era, many tribes and ethnic groups of India promote their respective ethnic attire while carrying out movements to establish their socio-cultural and political identity. By using traditional attire in these self assertion movements, people tried to showcase their uniqueness and at the same time traditional attire is considered as a strong tool of mobilising the common people.

The entire phases of the Bodo Movement have shown the extensive use of their ethnic attire. It is seen that male participant of the movement at least carried an

'Aronai' and females wear a *Dokhona*. Present researcher witnessed it while attending meetings and conferences organised by Bodo Sahitya Sabha and ABSU. Not only the distinguished guests present on the dais but the audience also wear traditional attire. Paralally, there were stalls to exhibit or sell traditional cloths placed near the meeting venue. Even today, in the ongoing movement for a separate Bodo state led by ABSU, there has been seen an extensive use of traditional dress to identify their cultural uniqueness and the activists use to wear traditional dress codes.

In this regard, Promod Bodo, president of ABSU remarks that it is a national duty of every individual of the tribe to wear his or her traditional attire. Traditional attires are the reminder of the rich cultural heritage of the tribe or caste and help people to move forward.<sup>43</sup> It is notable here that ABSU has decreed that the Bodo women should only wear their hand woven traditional attire or *Dokhona*<sup>44</sup>. Though the decree has an intention of reviving the culture and establish its uniqueness but such an attitude of presenting women alone as the guardians of culture reflects the overall undemocratic nature of a society.

In the long standing Bodo movement dress and food are the arenas where Bodos assert their difference. Based on his personal experience Sanjeev Baruah wrote '*at dinner during the rally in Kokrajhar, I attended; I was served pork, not exactly a common meat among Assamese Hindus. Most Bodo women specially activist and educated Bodo women, wear the Dokhona, instead of the Assamese Mekhela Chaddar or Indian Sari and many men using the traditional Bodo scarf, the Aronai*<sup>45</sup>'.



The Misings have also shown a reviving approach in regard to their traditional attire and traditional food items like the Bodos. Present researcher was present in the annual conferences of Mising Agom Kebang in years 2013-14 and 2016-17, there it was witnessed that all the Mising people attending these meetings wearing their traditional dress. It is mentionable that no organisation of the Misings has issued any specific recommendations regarding the dress code. It is clear that Mising society has spontaneously decided to wear their traditional attire. It is worth to mention that the executive members of Mising Agom Kebang always wear traditional attire while attending a council meeting. They have been following this unwritten tradition since 2014<sup>46</sup>.

Mising Bane Kebang from its formation days has been emphasising the importance of maintaining identity regarding attire. Bane Kebang through wide use of traditional dress in its various programmes tries to unify common people. It continues the process of mobilizing the common people as well as maintaining the unique identity of the community through activities like extensive use of traditional attire, preservation and propagation of other cultural heritage etc. Recollecting the memories of 1966 Kulajan Session of Mising Bane Kebang, Dr. N. Pegu wrote-

‘At 11 am. Of 6<sup>th</sup> February, 1966, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, the first lady Prime Minister of India landed from helicopter accompanied by Chief Minister Bimala Prasad Chaliha and Fokkeruddin Ali Ahmed. They were received in traditional way drumming and dancing. The procession was passed through the decorative main gate leading to the Pendle. One typical Murong was built by the villagers... after lunch and brief rest Mrs. Gandhi dressed in a pair of

colourful Mising Ege and Ribi presented by the chairman of the reception committee<sup>47</sup>. Regarding the topic of ethnic attire, remarks made by J.J. Kuli during his speech in Deori Sahitya Sabha Conference in 2014 is worth mentioning. In his speech, Kuli said, “It is not enough that we wear our traditional attire in meetings and gatherings organised within the community. Apart from our own meetings and gatherings, we should wear our traditional dress in every other meeting, where we are invited. Then other people can realise our unique identity through our dress.”

Mising organisations and associations have adopted the same policy in food items (traditional cuisines). Mising Autonomous Council sponsors many Traditional Food Festivals at various times with aims of promoting traditional cuisines and strengthening the economic foundation of the community. Along with different food items, traditional dresses are also displayed for sell in such Food Festivals. Mising people residing in different parts of Assam used to come to participate in these festivals with their traditional cuisines and handmade dresses made by Mising women. One such Food Festival gaining gradual popularity is organised and sponsored by Mising Autonomous Council every year in December-January at *Rudra Singha* Playground at Dispur, Assam.

It is noticed that the organisations and associations of the Misings use only traditional food items in their meetings and programmes. The trend of use of traditional cuisines in gatherings by the Mising organisation is not a new one and it has a long history of presenting traditional cuisines with an intention to mobilise people. Regarding the use of traditional cuisines in Kulajan Session of Mising Bane

Kebang N. Pegu writes “the Kebang activist collected good numbers of pigs, packets of Poro Apong and mounds of rice *from the villages to feed the invited guest*<sup>48</sup> .

Delicacies are an inseparable part of the identity of an ethnic group. Food lovers appreciate the variety and taste integral to Mising delicacies. The popularity of Mising cuisines indicates the positive commercial possibility in the field. Herbal and organic green like Takut, Takpiyang, Tajik, Ambe, Nyorik, Pakkam, Marchang, Gurban etc. should be produced in scientific way. As the leafy vegetables are widely used in Mising delicacies, so we need nurseries and farms to produce them in large scale.<sup>49</sup>

### **Composition of a comprehensive History**

One of the prime conditions for a nation or a community to establish its identity is the presentation of its history in an organised manner. Members of all strata of a community can be mobilized and moved forward by implementing a scientific history and igniting a historical consciousness among them. It is seen that both the ethnic groups- the Bodos and the Misings have put necessary attention in creating a historical awareness among all classes of their respective societies. Both the groups have published many books and booklets containing their ethnic history and other information. The initiative has helped people becoming historically aware and conscious about their past glory. But both the groups have yet to compile a complete set of history for their people. Bodo Sahitya Sabha has come forward to start the process.

Mising Bane Kebang has admitted the relevance of a complete history book for a better future of the Misings. It says “there is no scope of conducting scientific study and research on history, society, culture, economy and politics of the Misings. The basic infrastructure needed to construct such study and research is yet to take the form of an institute. It is very important to us to have a scientific information centre for study and research. Till now it remains difficult to find out booklets, books and magazines containing history, culture, literature, economy and any information of the society as they are not available in one single place. To meet this need it is utmost important to start a scientifically apt as well as organised library before 2024...considering the above mentioned aspects, let’s put our efforts together to build a ‘Mising Community Research and Development Centre.’<sup>50</sup> Putting stress on composition of a history the declaration again reads ‘a scientific and comprehensive history of the Misings should be composed before 2024’.

### **Popularising Songs Resonating Socio-Political Consciousness**

The politics of micro-nationalism<sup>51</sup> premised on a poetics about a homeland and its people. If nations and nationalities are ‘imagined communities’, it is a poetics that transforms the geography of an area into primal, home-like or sacred space and transforms a people into a collectivity with imagined ties of shared origin and kinship<sup>52</sup>. Songs and poems play important roles in opening new roads to a nation or a community by stimulating them with a national consciousness. S. Baruah, after analysing the impact of Dr. Bhupen Hazarika’s song in the process of development of the Assamese nationalism, remarks,

Hazarika's music has a remarkable resonance with the national narrative of the Assamese. Using his songs one can construct an unofficial history of Assamese nationality its hopes, aspirations and disappointments...The idea of nation as a mother is familiar motif in nationalist narratives. The motif appears constantly in Hazarika's music. The mother motif achieves a number of things-it makes the connection of a people to its homeland primal, the implied idea of a common womb gives members of the nation a sense of shared origins that minimises differences. In Hazarika's song 'Mother, what offering can I make at your feet?' (composed by Mukul Barua)-the relationship gets imbued with the sacredness of the symbolism of the mother goddess and the sacred obligation to repay through sacrifice<sup>53</sup>.

In a similar fashion, with the beginning 1950s, Bodo songs resonating ethnic consciousness started plotting its ground. He is no other than Nileswar Brahma,<sup>54</sup> the first singer to discuss about the contribution of Bodo songs to the society. Songs sung by Brahma in the 50s and 60s were able to won the hearts of the all strata of Bodo people. He sung about the liberation of the Bodos from century long darkness. The call for liberating Bodos from ignorance entwined in those songs helped the Bodos to be united for common goals. A few such songs earn immortal status and encourage the Bodos to search for a new future. Even now Nileswar Brahma's songs are equally popular like the past.

It is not to forget that '*Baroni Anchai Afat*<sup>55</sup>' another association founded to develop Bodo culture, language and literature plays the first organised role in popularising a specific song of Nileswar Brahma - '*Honoi Sanjaha Sorag Sana Foigou*

(see, the sun is rising in the east), that got immortal status in later period. Important to note that, the process of popularising the song among mass, successfully generated a cultural movement in the Bodo society. The song *Honoi Sanjaha Sorag Sana Foigou...* appeals the Bodos to wake up thus...

**Gist:**

“Hey, the bright sun is rising in the east

Hey, the early morning fresh winds flown

The Birds are flown

Hey, sleepy Bodo mother Dimapuri, Wake up

We are ignorant, we fail trying to wake up

We are failing to worship, if we wanted it to be

Though we worship your lovely looks from our desired heart”

Songs by Sulekha Basumatary<sup>56</sup> have also played an important role in developing new thoughts among the Bodos. Some songs of Sulekha are full of love for Bodo society and passionate call for awakening and unification of the Bodo people. Some songs represent the tough days of the Bodo movement and an appeal to stop the violence. One such song resonating greater cause of the Bodo society has much impact in creating consciousness about their future and the misdeeds in the days of the Bodo movement. The song is sung by Mrs, Sulekha Basumatary, lyricist was Brajendra Kumar Basumatary and dedicated to Bineswar Brahma, former president of Bodo

Sahitya Sabha, who was killed during his tenure by fratricidal killing in the Bodoland Movement. It sings thus

**Gist:**

“The truth itself has to hide inside the mouth

The tears has dried up inside the eyes itself

Human beings losses the love and caring

All the heart turned into stone

The nation who does not know to worship and love their language literature and culture

They do not have any meaning

Where there is no literature there is no sign of existence

Where there is no culture there would have symbol of existence

The nation who does not know worship their parents and home they do not have any ideology

Where there is no respect there is no civilised human being

Where there is no pen there is no history

The truth itself has to hide inside the mouth”

It is seen that the prayer songs ‘*Aroj*’ by Mangal Sing Hazowary are very popular among the Bodos. ‘*Aroj*’ are mainly hymns. *Arojs* are pleas to God for a beautiful future for the Bodos which they can achieve by walking through the pure path provided by Him. But the appeals of liberation from ignorance, darkness and century long slavery are very strong in this song. Most of the *Arojs* reflect the call of the lyricist to God to lead the Bodos from darkness to light and make them free from century long slavery. It is worth to mention that *Arojs* cross the limit of individual salvation which is the common characteristics of a ‘prayer’ and talks about the salvation of the Bodos as a whole. It is mentionable that for such appeals that these *Arojs* bear the following *Aroj* written by Mangal Sing Hazowary is selected as the official *Aroj* of ABSU. The *Ario* is played in every ABSU office in the morning and in the evening. It sings-

**Gist:**

“Hey God, let the pleasant wind flow in our world

Hey God, let us move ahead with love, tolerance and knowledge

Hey God, with your blessings let us through while our nation is in crisis

Hey God, let the pleasant wind flow in our world

If we cannot hold our heart in the time of crisis

Come to us and show us the light...

Hey God, let the pleasant wind flow in our world”



Not only individual songs but chorus of songs with ethnic sentiment played by different organisations also have much impact in creating socio-economic and political consciousness among people. Present researcher, has attended the Third Annual *Siju Day* celebration programme organised by Asom Bodo- Kachari Jatiya Parishad on 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> December, 2016. The chorus song of the celebration programme is a fine example of the fact mentioned above<sup>57</sup>. As the organisation named Asom Bodo-Kachari Jatiya Parishad (*Assamese speaking*), an organisation of the Assamese speaking Bodo Kachari people outside BTC, so the chorus song sings in Assamese thus-

*(Aha aami ake gitake gao, ake surake gao, andhar samajar andhar atarai andhar pathat banti jalao.)*

**Gist:**

“...Let’s sing the same song

Let’s hum the same tune

Let’s dispel the darkness of the lightless society and lit the roads

We are Assamese speaking Bodo-Kachari

We are sons of the soil

Who can deny it

History remembers us,

History narrates our glory.”

Mising songs too play a vital role in making aware and organising the common people. Mising lyricists have started to try to write songs in the 1940s. Mahidhar Pegu<sup>58</sup>, Tarun Chandra Pamegum<sup>59</sup> and Dr. Nomal Chandra Pegu<sup>60</sup> were three pioneers of the Mising songs and music. The following song written by Mahidhar Pegu in the 1940s is said to be the first Mising modern song<sup>61</sup> -

*“Adiyoi Talakkoo Toglan*

*Bidunou, Aayingyo Moh diwoim kango Bidunui...”*

The pioneers mentioned above used to write songs on themes like social reform, call to come forward and creating mass awareness. They let the songs spread to the all Mising villages<sup>62</sup>.

*“Kajaw Kajaw Kajaw School lapa kajaw*

*Angou Brira Kridanga Parikal Kajaw...”<sup>63</sup>”*

**Gist: -**

“Let’s go the school Brothers,

Come all, let’s go to study

Discard sleep and tiredness

Let’s move forward with other developed society.”

The song was written by Mohidhar Pegu. It expresses a call for all Mising people to come forward to step equally with the developed one by the means of

education discarding all ignorance. One among the most revered lyricists of the Misings is Tarun Chandra Pamegum. He is the lyricist of the 'Flag Hosting Song' of the Mising Agom Kebang titled '*Tomegsunam Mimang Gasosre*'. The song became the main source of mass awakening of the Misings. It sings-

**Gist:-**

Let's unfold the flag ... let's unfold

On this auspicious day let's offer our prayers to the new dawn on the east

From the depth of our hearts... and to our mother Sun

Listening the advice of *Doying Babu* or (the person who knows the history of the community)

Let's organised the Agom Kebang in this evergreen land

And pray to the creator

Our speech will be blooming as far as the river flows

Our speech will be survived as long as the earth exist

And we'll continue to fix a new date to organise Agom Kebang

Let's explore the 'unseen' (to the remote Mising villages)

Step into this beautiful journey together

Let's call upon the entire Mising people

The song represents the entire Mising society. Another popular song written by Pamegum is-

*'Lungema Dama Donyi Ama Polo Abou nama...'*

**Gist:-**

“Won’t address you as the daughter of the sun,

You are the son of moon

Won’t address you as the rich who lives on the golden-silver land...

I am not bothered by your past

But now you are poor, deprived and destitute

Mother Sun and Father Moon will shower compassion

The Mising will once again be strong

Peace will prevail.”

The call to awaken the nation is clear in this song which was the chorus of the opening ceremony of Kulajan Conference of missing Bane Kebang in 1966<sup>64</sup>. The song was-

*“Okunu biyyane migomnom*

*Opane misinge ngoluna”*

Songs describing the glorious history of the Misings and praising various aspects of the community have encouraged the common people to walk into a new age. Though *Oinitams* are mainly songs praising love, yet a handful of *Oinitams* depict history and culture of the Misings too. They also inspire the Misings to usher into a new age based on their glorious past and rich heritage<sup>65</sup>. One such *oinitom* is as follows<sup>66</sup>-

*“Ngluk gawnam bamnam chow aar gawnam bamnam*

*Land aada dakkeband gawlen bamna ginanaw...”*

**Gist:**

“Our attire is the real attire

We adorned the attire at the beginning and created our present culture

The attire is more valuable than gold or silver

We can introduce ourselves as Mising sons by wearing the attire.”

Present day singers like Suruj Kumar Patiri and Pabitra Kumar Pegu sing a few songs which work as reminders to the Misings of their socio-economic and political existence.

The contribution of the Mising Dirbi Kebang in preservation, revive and propagation of cultural elements of the Misings are noteworthy. To fulfil the above mentioned tasks, Dibri Kebang was established in 1980<sup>67</sup>. From the day of its establishment till now, Mising Dirbi Kebang has been dedicatedly working to preserve

the cultural uniqueness and heritage of the Misings. Hemchandra Dole, general secretary of Mising Dirbi Kebang comments on the active role of the Kebang in cultural affairs of the society in modern times<sup>68</sup> “Mising Dibri Kebang is no longer an association of a handful of artists who sing on radio or records or cassettes or cultural shows like the past. The present day Dibri Kebang organises Mising Audio Cassettes Competitions, Mising Film Festivals and passes proposals of making Mising Feature Films. To create cultural awareness among the Misings, it proposes to organise ‘*Dirbi Yamnum*’ (cultural processions) on both sides of the Brahmaputra and in every directions; it proposes to organise joint cultural evenings of *Tani* artists from Arunachal Pradesh and Mising artists of the plains. One grand wish of the Mising Dirbi Kebang is to compile an Anglo-Assamese cultural dictionary of the Misings in the line of an encyclopaedia”

It is worth to mention that Dirbi Kebang has been trying to retain the original form of *Gumrag*. The dance form has lost many of its original elements with time. So, the Kebang organises regular *Gumrag* dance workshops so that the dance can revive the original and remain a uniform shape among the Misings of all parts of Assam.<sup>69</sup> *Gumrag* is the main dance form related to *Ali Aai Lrigang*- the national festival of the Misings. The tireless efforts of the Mising Dibri Kebang result in a revival of *Gumrag* in its original form all over Assam.

The trend of preservation, development and revival of the traditional cultural uniqueness of the Misings is interrupted by certain problems. Pramananda Chayengia<sup>70</sup> in his appeal of the second Mising Youth Festival held in 1998 expressed

some of the biggest problems faced by the Misings as an ethnic group and cultures as follows-“At present, we are facing the problem of landlessness and scarcity of food. Yet we are going to hold the Youth Festivals. We see pictures of exploitation, deceive and oppression. We are surrounded everywhere by colourful evil imperialist culture. Youth, who should have derived motivation from the dynamism of new creations or stood against all injustice and ill-treats with a strong voice of protest, but it is submerged in mire. There emerging dangerous mentalities like destroying other’s life by vicious scandals or compromising the nation to became rich overnight instead of embracing a healthy work-culture is seen everywhere. Such tendencies will make us slaves of foreign colonial powers and local rulers as well as exploiters. We will lose our thousand years old glorious history, heritage and priceless culture of the community.”<sup>71</sup>

Culture is the mirror of a nation. Culture validates the existence of a nation or a particular ethnic group. It is the basic requirements to have the cultural elements such as religion, language, song, dance etc. unadulterated among people of the particular group which is trying to establish its unique socio-economic and political existence. The development of cultural elements makes a community dynamic and fills it with needed vitality. It is well discussed that a part of the Bodos and the Misings has accepted various sects of Hinduism as a result of a long assimilation process. Likewise, another small fraction of both the communities has become followers of Christianity. There raised a resurrection movement among the Bodos in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century named the ‘*Brahma* Movement’. Though, the movement was to

some extend successful in reducing the rate of conversion and to unite the people but, a few who were initiated by different Hindu Gurus refused to discard their new identity of 'Sarania' an identity separate from Bodos. Nikhil Bathow Mahasabha, founded in the beginning of the 1990s has been trying ceaselessly for religious revivalism and unification of the Bodos from the day of its inception. They enjoyed some success in their endeavour. It is noticed that though there is a rising awareness regarding the importance to retain the traditional religious belief of the Mising society, yet there is no organised activity to revive it among the community. There is *Donyi Polo* Movement to revive and resurrect religious belief of the people of the *Tani* origin. But the movement is still unable to touch the all strata of Mising people. It seems that there is a growing awareness among both the Bodos and the Misings regarding traditional attires and traditional cuisines. In the field of music, a handful of popular singers also have contributed to make both the Bodos and the Misings aware, conscious and united through their songs. Nileswar Brahma, Mangal Sing Hazowary and Sulekha Basumatary from the Bodos and Mohidhar Doley, Tarun Chandra Pamegum, Dr. N. Pegu and others from the Misings have made significant contributions to unite and make people aware on various issues such as social reform. Mising Dibri Kebang has been playing an active role in preservation and development of various cultural elements of the Misings.



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- <sup>17</sup> Narzi, B., Op.cit., pp. 17-18.
- <sup>18</sup> Personal interview with Mangal Sing Hazowary on 19<sup>th</sup> December, 2016. Mangal Sing Hazowary is the first chief organising secretary and present advisor to Nikhil Bathow Mahasabha. He is the first Sahitya Akademy Award winner laureate in Bodo language.
- <sup>19</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>20</sup> Annual session of the Morigaon Anchalik Bahow Sangathan organized on 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> December, 2016.

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- <sup>21</sup> Personal interview with Mangal Sing Hazowary.
- <sup>22</sup> See *The Siju*, The mouthpiece of 'Assam Boro Kachari Jatiya Parishad', Vol.I. 2015.
- <sup>23</sup> Memorandum submitted to Assam Government, Ref No-ABKJP/001CM/101/14 (17/7/2015) and memorandum submitted to Assam Government Ref. No-ABKJP/001CM/01/15 (31/7/2015).
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- <sup>34</sup> Pegu, B., *Changing Beliefs and Practices of the Mising Tribe of Assam: A case study of the Majuli Island*, An unpublished doctoral thesis of Dibrugarh University, 2015, pp.136-137.
- <sup>35</sup> They include *Nyisi, Tagin, Hill Miri, Apatani, Adi, Galo* and Mising. All they claimed them as the direct decendents of their great legendary human father called *Abu-Tani*. They are the ardent follower of the cult Donyi-Polo.
- <sup>36</sup> Kaling, B., *Gogo Bote Talam Rukbo: his thoughts and deeds*, Pasighat, 2002, p.13.
- <sup>37</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>38</sup> Pegu, B., Op.cit., pp.146-147.
- <sup>39</sup> Ibid.

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- <sup>40</sup> Personal interview with T.R. Taid on 16<sup>th</sup> July, 2015, founder president of Mising Agom Kebang.
- <sup>41</sup> Personal interview with J.J. Kuli on 13<sup>th</sup> July, 2016, former president of Mising Agom Kebang.
- <sup>42</sup> Personal interview with Girin Morang on 7 August, 2016, Secretary, Mising Bane Kebang.
- <sup>43</sup> Personal interview with Promod Boro 16<sup>th</sup> July, 2015, President of All Bodo Students Union.
- <sup>44</sup> Rupa Chinai in [www.kanglaonline.com/](http://www.kanglaonline.com/)
- <sup>45</sup> Baruah, S., 2003, Op.cit., pp.186-187.
- <sup>46</sup> Personal interview with J.J. Kuli on 13<sup>th</sup> July, 2016, former president, Mising Agom Kebang.
- <sup>47</sup> Pegu, N., *The Misings of the Brahmaputra Valley*, Dibrugarh, Published by the author, 2011, p.167.
- <sup>48</sup> Ibid., p.166.
- <sup>49</sup> See Community Agenda and Directives: The Gogamukh Declaration, Unanimously accepted during a Mising Community Session held at Gogamukh on the 30<sup>th</sup>, 31<sup>th</sup> January and 1<sup>st</sup> February, 2015.
- <sup>50</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>51</sup> Specific term used by Sanjib Baruah, author of *India Against Itself: Assam and The Politics of Nationality*, Oxford University Press, 2003.
- <sup>52</sup> Baruah, S. 1994, Op. cit., pp.649-671.
- <sup>53</sup> Ibid. pp. 654-655.
- <sup>54</sup> The first Bodo singer and a radio artist that recorded songs in Gramophone. His songs are still very popular among the Bodo people of Assam.
- <sup>55</sup> *Baroni Anchai Afat* was formed in 1952 under the leadership of Samar Brahma Choudhary and Prasenjit Brahma for the development of Bodo culture, language and literature.
- <sup>56</sup> Sulekha Basumatary is a modern Bodo singer. Some of her songs have deep influence on the Bodo movement.
- <sup>57</sup> The researcher personally attended the meeting as an invited guest. The session was started with the chorus sung by more than twenty lady singers. The chorus was sung in Assamese and Mrs. Sumala Boro, president of the women wing of *Assam Bodo Kachari Jatiya Parishad*, is the lyricist of the song.

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<sup>58</sup> Mohidhar Pegu was the first generation Mising intellectual and first artist to sing modern Mising song.

<sup>59</sup> The first generation Mising lyricist, singer, composer Tarun Chandra Pamegum was the radio artist of Shillong, Guwahati and Dibrugarh Radio centre. He was also the chair person of Mising Bane Kebang Kulajan Conference in 1966.

<sup>60</sup> Dr. Nomal Pegu was the first generation Mising intellectual, author of the book-‘*The Misings of the Brahmaputra Valley*’, Dibrugarh.

<sup>61</sup> Pegu, P.K., *Mising Samaj Sanskritir Rengani*, Dibrugarh, Koustav Prakashan, 2014, p.124.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid. pp.124-125.

<sup>63</sup> Mohidhar Pegu was the lyricist of this song. The song has a strong appeal for discarding all ignorance and to come forward to step equally with the develop society.

<sup>64</sup> The song was written by Dr. N. Pegu in 1948. The chorus in the particular meeting was led by Ganesh Pegu with local youths.

<sup>65</sup> Personal interview with Suruj Kumar Patiri on 29<sup>th</sup> December, 2016, president of Mising Dirbi Kebang.

<sup>66</sup> Hakacham, U.R., “Mising Bihu Duti Dharar Apurba Samgam”, *Ane Obonori*, mouthpiece of 22<sup>nd</sup> Mising Agom Kebang, 2016, pp.107-108.

<sup>67</sup> See *Dirbi*, Mouthpiece of Mising Dirbi Kebang, Special issue of All Assam Gumrag Dance Competition, 2016, p.57.

<sup>68</sup> See *Dirbi*, Mouthpiece of Mising Dirbi Kebang, 2013, p.85.

<sup>69</sup> Personal interview with Suruj Kumar Patiri, president of Mising Dirbi Kebang, also see See *Dirbi*, 2016, Mouthpiece of Mising Dirbi Kebang, Special issue of All Assam Gumrag Dance Competition.

<sup>70</sup> Paramananda Chayengia is a leader of the Mising socio-political movement. Presently he is the chief executive of Mising Autonomous Council.

<sup>71</sup> Chayengia, P., “Mising Juva Mahotsabar Chamu Itihas”, *Ane Bilam*, Mouthpiece of Mising Bane Kebang, 2005.