

**THE ROLE OF CHRISTIANITY IN NORTH-EAST INDIA :
A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY**

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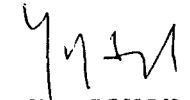
CERTIFICATE

This dissertation entitled "THE ROLE OF CHRISTIANITY IN NORTH-EAST INDIA: A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY" by A.S. Yaruigam for the Degree of Master of Philosophy is an original work and has not been previously submitted for any other Degree of this or any other university.

We recommend this dissertation to be placed before the examiners for evaluation.


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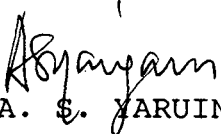
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Chapter-I

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER I

It would not be an exaggeration to say that, from economic, socio-political, and educational point of view North East tribals are more advanced than the tribals of any other areas in India. Among the many factors which have contributed to it, Protestantism is the most important one.

This Dissertation attempts to study how far this religion has affected the socio-political, and economic institutions of the three protestant dominated states : Meghalaya, Nagaland, and Mizoram-in North East India.

A brief Historical Account of Protestantism :

Protestantism is one of the three major divisions of universal Christian religion. It is only four and a half century old. There are various segmentary divisions within itself. Nevertheless, the paramount Protestant Christian belief rests on the notion that God deals directly with man, and complete salvation is only possible when the latter reposes his complete faith in the former. Consequently, religion has become the hub of Christians' life.

Protestant movement began in the 16th century under the leadership of Martin Luther, a Professor of theology in Wittenberg University in Germany. Two of his

contemporaries, Ulrich Zwingli and John Calvin,¹ who were notable among many of the champions of this new sect, simultaneously joined the movement. The socio-political and economic condition of Europe was more or less ripe enough for reformation when Luther took up the cudgel. The spirit of rationality and freedom had already developed in people's hearts and minds. They had begun to question the meaning and purpose of human life. The people were no longer willing to passively submit to the autocratic and authoritarian rule of Pope.²

On the other hand, the condition of Roman church had deteriorated. The church which was supposed to guide and keep people's divine consciousness had turned into an evil institution. The leaders of the church - the Pope and the clergy of every rank and file - were pursuing their own selfish interests. The natural consequence was that there were many cases of corruption, cheating, misappropriation and embezzlement of the finance etc. In addition, favoritism, and immorality were rampant even among the clergymen. Intrigue, falsity, duplicity, armed warfare and all sorts of nasty activities were employed by both the Papal authorities as well as civilian government to

1. Dunstan, J.lislie, Protestantism (London: Prentic-hall International 1961) .p.10

2. Ibid. p.18.

establish their own supremacy. The church which was supposed to keep the people in unison was ironically enough divided in itself into various warring groups.

On the other hand, with the invention of printing press, scriptures became easily available to the masses. By reading these scriptures the people knew the origin of Christian faith which hitherto had been known mainly to the elite groups. The cloud of mystery behind the rites and rituals, festivals, and letargy which had been hovering in people's mind soon disappeared. Such was the social, political and religious condition when Protestant reformation began.³

Martin Luther, a member of the clergy, was much disappointed with the then prevailing condition. He could not find any peace, and gratification through all these ritualistic practices. It is said that he underwent a deep introspection. The quotation which follows provides ample insights into his spiritual condition.

3. Ibid. p.25.

Then God appears dreadfully angry and with him, the whole of his creation.

There is no possibility of escape, either within or without but all is accusationAt this momentthe soul cannot believe that it can ever be consoled(it) is.....left with the naked longing for help, and terrifying fearfulness, but it does not know when aid can come. This represents the soul stretched bones can be numbered, nor is there any rich that is not filled with most bitter pain, horror, fear and grief

Luther's despair was so profound that his health got ruined. Luther found the answer of his problem in the doctrine of the justification by faith which is based on Rom. 1:17, "The just shall live by faith".⁴

From that time onwards Luther not only began to advocate his new experience but also criticised the Papal church. He published many extracts and pamphlet and distributed them to the masses. A few important ones include 'The address to Christian nobility' The Babylonean captivity of church and 'The freedom of Christian men' etc.⁵

Though the reformation had many dimensions the real thrust was in the reinterpretation of the New Testament that holds the principle of the 'justification only by faith'. He advocated that man can be accepted by God as

4. Ibid. p.57-58.

5. Ibid.

righteous by the faith alone. This new assertion gave rise to the notion that all believers were priests and had equal access to God. This principle has directly removed the distinction between the clergy and the laity and has emphasised the fellowship of Christian congregation freely.

Equally important is the stress upon the written scripture as the source of authority. There is no other source of authority for believers except the scriptures. This notion has ended, though indirectly, the authority of both the Council of Clergy and Pope. Besides, the protestant church has laid stress on individual activities and has sought to reduce the intervention of politics in religious matters.⁶

Under the backdrop of such principles Luther criticised Popes severely. The following lines show Luther's reaction to Pope.

Dos thou hear O Pope ! not the most holy
but the most sinful; would that God will
hurl thy chair headlong from heaven and
cast it down into the hell of abyss !
who gave you the power to break
and to boost what he has commanded to teach
christian, more specially German, who are
of noble nature and are famed to be

6. Hans J. Hiklerbrand, Protestant Reformation. (London : Mac Millan 1968), p.xv.

false, unfaithful, perjured treacherous
and wicked.

Luther's rebels against the church came into limelight when he wrote his 95 theses against the Pope and Clergymen and their actions. Consequently, he was excommunicated from the church in 1520. Luther received much support from various sections of the society. By 1521 the movement gained momentum in the Northern Europe; It also received the support from the grass roots and the politicians as well so much so that many were drawn to its membership.

In Germany, by the peace of Augsburge in 1555, came into vogue the legal acceptance of Protestantism as a national religion. In the same decade in England also, the Queen's settlement decreed to lasting success the Protestant movement. In due course by the end of the 16th century almost all the North European states, notably Scotland, Northern Ireland, Holland, England, Germany, Switzerland etc. became Protestant countries.⁸ The Protestant churches, however, began their missionary activities only after two decades since the nations were busy defending against

7. Dunstan J. Lislle, op cit.p82.

8. Ibid p.176.

themselves from the Papal persecution. Moreover, in the following years, Protestantism gradually became a part of nations so much so that each of them started building up their own nation. The mission began in the 18th century; many important missions were organised. The Propagation of Mission in Foreign Parts 1792; William Cary's Baptist Missionary society 1792; London Missionary Society 1795; The Scottish Church Society: 1795, London Jews Society, 1813; General Baptist Missionary Society, and Bible Society, 1804, were the evangelical missions which began to exist in the 18th and 19th century. It was mainly through these missionary organisations that Protestantism reached out to the other parts of the World, specially, to non-European countries.

During the medieval period the church controlled all the other social institutions in Europe. However Protestantism, when it separated from the Catholic church, altered profoundly the relationship which existed between the church and other institutions and also between the church and men. The new economic political and social institutions were established on the basis of personal freedom and rationality. The replacement of monarchy by modern democracy opened up opportunity for every one to participate in the political process; the changes from the

agrarian society to industrial society based on machines brought into existence new social relationships. Some one rightly remarks :

While once the western world was a unity through Christian Church, now the whole world is a unity through the machine and ideas of man's freedom.⁹

The Protestant Ethic: Its Social Dimensions

Max Weber's The Protestant Ethics and the spirit of Capitalism¹⁰ is an important sociological study of religion and its impact on society. In this book Weber has sought to understand the rise of modern capitalism through Protestantism. He has argued that Protestant ethic was an antecedent to modern capitalism and that it has an important factor in its development. He has precisely argued that the accumulation of wealth on the one hand and restriction on consumption on the other, has led to the rise of modern capitalism.

Eisenstadt has also argued that the initial impetus of Protestantism was an attempt to establish a new

9. Ibid : Op.Cit. p.157.

10. Weber, W, "The Protestant ethics and the Spirit of Capitalism". (London: Elwin Hyman Ltd. 1930).

civilization totally regulated by religious precepts. The significance of this Protestantism is to be found in the contribution toward the restructuring of European society, particularly its legal, political, and economic systems. All these were mainly due to the transformational potential inherent in this religion which has two distinct aspects. Firstly, its unique synthesis of worldliness and transcendentalism orients an individual toward the mundane activities of this world. Secondly, this religion has a strong emphasis on individual's activity and responsibility".¹¹

Eisenstadt holds that Protestant reformation indeed has an innermost impact upon social political and economic transformation of European society. Though this was not the intention of the rulers, who adopted Protestantism, it imparted more flexibility and dynamism to the existing social system. Further, its ethics, too has made an impact on the external cohesion and autonomy of the more active social groups in the society, which finally had radically transformed the traditional political structure. ¹² Two

11. Eisenstadt, S.N. Protestant ethic and modernization., (New York: basic books, INC, 1968) p.12.

12. Eisenstadt, S.N. "Transformation of socio political and cultural order in modernization", American Sociological Review, Vol.30, 1965, p.695.

factors are greatly held responsible for this: Firstly it catered to the need of Protestant ruler to find a new source of legitimation and to enforce a new symbol of national identity. Thus, a new rule of relationship developed between the ruler and the ruled. Secondly, the rulers sought to bring about new political institutions based on idea of contract and covenant, which further led to liberalization of business and political cooperation. All these elements have gone into the creation of new political symbols and new bases of political obligation resulting in a more flexible political infrastructure.¹³

Eisenstadt further maintains that the transformative potential of Protestantism has three specific economic effects in terms of role development: (i) the definition of new economic roles and economic collectivities, which are not tied to the traditional economic and political framework, (ii) provision of broader institutional organisation and legal normative settings which gave the new role both legitimacy and the necessary resources and also the framework with which their continuous operation was accelerated, and (iii) development of new notions for the understanding of such a role and an identity

13. Eisenstadt S.N, (1968) Protestant Ethics. and modernization. p.15.

with them.¹⁴

Michael Walzer views that the Protestant ideas of purely individual relationship of saints to God, its emphasis upon voluntary and mutual consent to church government among saints themselves, and the extraordinary reliance upon the printed word with each man of his own interpretation have prepared the liberal mind. Further the liberal alliance of Puritans and parliamentarians created a more liberal society in the West. He also seems to hold that the Puritanism has sponsored a significant rationalization in the behaviour, especially in work. It trained men to work systematically and to pay attention to details. In this sense, the Protestantism is closely related to a long term process which finally culminated into a rational-legal system.¹⁵

Holton and Turner have maintained that the notion of conceptualization of rationality is a direct outcome of Protestantism. They have viewed that rationalization is a process made up of a varieties of processes such as secularization, intellectualization and systematization of everyday world. Such a view of rationalization has created

14. Ibid, p.17

15. Michael Walzer 'Puritanism as a revolutionary ideology' in Eisentadt, S.N, ed. Protestant ethics and modernisation p.501.

the condition for the dominance of natural science and extension of human control over nature. The task of a sociologist, therefore, is to understand that uniqueness of modern capitalistic society.¹⁶

They further observe that Protestantism has placed emphasis on the isolation of individual from the subjective experience of guilt and the rational organisation of life in order to transform an individual into an ethical personality. They have emphasised the self-motivated activity of the autonomous separate individual, whose life has been organised by a detailed scheme or calling and who has adopted a highly calculative and rational attitude toward the environment, is an important element of Protestantism. Individuals who are brought up in such doctrine and environment, are the participants in modern capitalistic culture.¹⁷ Furthermore, the landmarks of modern growth such as rational-legal system, the separation of home and work place, rational administration are the outcomes of Protestantism. They see the transition of European history from a status-based community to an open community and from feudal privilege to an open market situation characterised

16. Holton and Turner, Max Weber on Economy and Society (London, Routledge 1989). p.83.

17. Ibid., p.86.

by social class and market relations which are a part of rational element present in Protestant belief. Such a society is, in fact, an evolution from a traditional communal group to an open association with secular rational relationship."¹⁸

Steven Siedman also have viewed that the attempt of an individual to master and systematise all the aspects of environment, including the emotional and irrational dimensions of human nature, is the principle of worldly ascetic action which is very much present in Protestant religion. Such an ascetic action tends to produce a type of personality which is suitable to the modern bourgeois spirit as revealed in self-reliance, methodical nurtured in such a tradition has an inner-directed type of personality actively involved in worldly affairs. Instead of remaining passive to their vocational placement, he confronts the world without any illusion and superstition.¹⁹

Siedman further notices that in Protestantism level of rationality attained full development by eliminating magic and forming a unitary ethical personality. It was so due to forcing the notion of personal creator God

19. Siedman, Steven, Liberalism and Origin of European Social Theory, (London: Black Well Pub) 1983. p.219.

and coupling with this the idea of human being as an instrument of God in the world. Such a belief triggered the development of an elaborative code of theoretical and practical rationalism mainly centered upon mastery through calculated, methodical control and organisation of the world.²⁰

Gerth and Mills argue from a completely different angle. They note that Christianity, which is a salvational religion, created a new community centered around the prophecy. When this community is created their relationship with their own sib is disturbed. The old blood relationship is completely broken and a new one of brotherliness is developed among the members. The members of this new community are considered to be morally qualified for any activity specially in business enterprises; and it has two elements or principles: the dualism of (i) ingroup and (ii) outgroup morality. From this ingroup morality a simple reciprocal relationship - "As you do unto me I shall do unto you"²¹ arises. This leads to economical life which is based on brotherly reciprocity. The rich were obliged to extend their help to the brothers who were poor in the community. Such principle of brotherly love or reciprocity played an

20. Ibid., p.211.

21. Ibid., p.152.

important role in this new community life and it distinguished itself from the outgroup of community known as 'Outsiders'.²²

Ersnt Troelstch sharing the same view with Gerth and Mills further maintains that the main impact of Christian ideas does not obtain directly through ethical demand itself but rather indirectly through the form of religious community based on a new principle. He states that the actual separation of community from all things, social and economic, has occurred in Christianity. Christianity, thus, has grown up on the border line between the East and the West out of the religions motivation of humanitarianism and the hope of redemption.

Donald and Levin, having the similar view of Troelstch argues that the development of European Christianity reinforces a decisive ethical move toward rationalised capitalism. In this regard Protestantism has played a most important part in the process of modernization because of its idea requires a specific religious work ethics from those who belong to this community.²³

22. Gerth and Mills, From Max Weber Essay on Seriology (London: Rontledge and Kegan Paul 1971). p.239.

23. Donald and Levine 'Rationality and freedom' in Social enquiry, Vol.51, 1981, P.34

Protestant Movement and its Impact on Non-European Countries

Protestant movement began in Europe in the 16th century. However, it became world wide only in the 18th and 19th century. Not only in the Western part, but also in many Asian countries it spread such as India, Japan, China, Korea, Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore, Burma etc. The nature of the movement in this part of the world, however, is quite different from that of Europe. The most of the movements were collective in nature rather than individual. Various cultural, economic, political and social condition played crucial role in it.

Usually, Western policy of colonialism came hand in hand with christianity. The basic interest is to introduce this new western religious ethic and at the same time to colonize the nation socio-culturally, economically and even politically. Though their policy had not been fully succeeded it is the fact, that they have given great impact to the Asian countries.

The most important impact visible has been the Western ideology of liberalism. The oriental society is basically a clan-kinship centered society. The loyalty of the people towards their ancestors or family ties are very strong. This limits the freedom of the individual. But after

the advent of the Westerners their social structure was gradually disrupted. The spirit of liberalism (freedom) and individualism began to penetrate into peoples' lives and way, of thinking. People began to interact or associate with other ethnic communities which freed them from their traditional kinship or clan bound life.²⁴

This transformation of basic attitudes by the people towards their traditional social ethos, has much social implications. Political, economic and other institutions have partially shifted to western models. In the political sphere, for example, the age old loyalty of the people to their ancestral leaders or emperor have given way to the new democratically elected representatives. (The autocratic system which is based on adult franchise) In Japan the old feudalism is being replaced by democratic since 1871. The members of the Parliament were elected by the people on the basis of adult franchise.²⁵

F.L.K, HSU, views that the Chinese Communism is the outcome of the Western liberal philosophy. He argued that this is the clear example of the shifting of people,s

24 HSU, F.L.K., Clan, Caste and Club, (New York: Van Nostrand, Reihold Company 1963), p. 260.

25 Dunand, Mill, Oriental Heritage: (New York; Semon and Schulter 1954), p.248.

loyalty from their traditional clan-based and autocratic rule to a new leadership in quest of freedom. The economic implication of the western impact is seen in the development of the capitalistic system. In Japan, for instance, the feudal economy was completely replaced by the modern western capitalistic system. They began to adopt western know-hows and technology. The educational institutions were also run in western models. But the situation was different in India. Here, the educational institutions are also made to be more of religious oriented.²⁶ In case of China, Korea, Japan, Singapore etc. the educational institutions are rather technically oriented.

The contact of the oriental societies with the west have also altered, in some ways, the moral aspect of the people. The introduction of the universal franchise and keen competition in modern trades have brought a proportionate share of democratic venality, industrialism and financial legerdemain in the oriental society. Besides, such contacts have also changed the behaviour and concept of the new generation. People began to migrate to Urban areas forming nuclear families and availing new opportunities. It also undermined the parental authority, replaced family ties with individualism, and the old custom and ethic to the

26. HSU, FLK, (1963) op.cit. p.248.

unconcerned younger generation.²⁷ Also, the impact on the literary fields is also felt tremendously. Eg. Christian missionaries mastered some oriental languages which enable them to compile dictionaries or encyclopaedias and translate Bible, hymns and other western literatures into local languages. Thus enriching Oriental literatures.²⁸

Protestantism came to Japan and Korea in the last part of the 19th century. Even among the Asian countries the response to this new religion varied from country to country depending on its socio-historical background. In Korea, the movement was very successful. A few factors are greatly responsible for it. By the time Protestantism arrived over there her political social religious and economical conditions were at their lowest key. Consequently whole of the nation was passing through an intensive psychological upheaval and eagerly looking forward to some spiritual force which could set them right. Simultaneously, the traditional religion was on the verge of decay so much so that it failed to provide ample psychological comfort to the nation.²⁹ Under the circumstances when Protestant missions came, they

27. Durant, Mill, (1968) Cit.op. 924.

28. Buss A. Claud 'Asia in Modern World' (London : Collian - McMillan Limited 1968) p.201.

29. Paik,La-Geon, George ; History of Protestant Mission in Korea. (Seoul: Yonsei University Press, 1976), p.367.

found much relief in it; they were somehow convinced that Protestantism would be the 'expedient' means to 'elevate morally and spiritually, apart from modernizing the country. Thus Protestantism became for many a panacea for moral and spiritual problems of the society. In this new religion they found the inspiration and encouragement to rejuvenate their spirits. They found a close affinity between their own agonising experience under foreign bondage and the Biblical account of the trial of Israelites under Egyptian oppressors. Consequently, they could envisage a national reawakening leading to the establishment of a new independent nation.³⁰ In the meantime the revival came through the works of a Canadian Missionary, Dr. R.A. Hardic. It was followed by a series of Bible study, camps and conferences which led many to convert into this new religion. This was what a missionary observed:

Whatever may be the result, the development of event in Korea will be watched by men with keenest interest, and not the least interested will be those who see in this outpouring manifestation of that which proceeded the great Wesleyan

30 Carls, Caldarolo, Religion and societies: Asia and Middle East. (New York: Mouton Publisher 1982), p.640

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movement. You have only to read the journal of John Wesley and compare it with the account of the manifestation at Pying Yang to realise that the phenomena are very closely akin. There is in both cases an extra-ordinary manifestation of power, people are convinced of their sins by another force than reason and the power that convince give them strength not only to overcome sin but to convince others. The Korean who were at the original meetings have gone forth, like Wesley's converts, their proceeding has been wonderfully successful-so much so that there are not a few who say that it is through Korea that the light of Christianity will shine to the far Eastern World".³¹

Another factor which contributed to the success of Protestantism in Korea is the analogy of the traditional concept of God to Christianity. The 'Hananim' of the Korean God denotes the supreme creator of the universe. Thus, when the missionaries taught them that "In the beginning God

31. Paik, La Geon, George (1976) Op.Cit. p.375.

created heaven and earth, they said "Haninim". Such a similarity in the concept of God led many Koreans to accept christianity at once.³² Because of its egalitarian factor Protestantism penetrated deeply into all sections and regions of the society.

Contrary to it, we find a different nature of Protestant movement in Japan and India. In the former the Protestant movement was mostly urban-centered where as in the later rural oriented. Social and cultural factors were responsible to it. In the former case, the converts had to reject the two traditional norms: Conformity with the Community and filial piety of the Japanese social life. This obviously posed problem at both the family and the community levels. In the cases the head of a family remained unconverted, it was difficult for any member of the family to change his religion. As a result of these hostile feelings, the converts tended to be people with relatively free from constraints and obligations of local kinship communities or who were alienated from the traditional ties and who were in search of a new value system. Thus, unmarried students, who attended missionary's schools in urban centres and who were exposed to western knowledge,

32. Spencer J. Palmer, Korea and Christianity (Seoul: Hollym Corporation 1967), p.18.

easily accepted christianity. Besides, in the urban society, where traditional family tie was not that strong, was more susceptible to missionary influences. That is why Protestant missions were mostly confined in urban centres influencing a large chunk of urban middle class.³³

Apart from this, many youths considered western culture. They were amazed by marvels of technical and industrial strides of the west. Thus many were converted to Christianity.³⁴

Whatever may be the nature of the conversion of the movement, one common important impact of christianity in both Korea and Japan is its industrial and technical education. This has resulted in the basic changed in its economic infrastructure; they have been transformed from an agririan nation to an industrially developed one.

The first socialist movement in Japan was an aftermath of Christianity that was already prevailing over there at that time.³⁵

In India most of the converts are hailed from lower

33. Carls, Cardarolo, 'Japan: Religious Syncretism in a Secular Society' Carlo-Cardarola ed., Religion and societies: in Asia and middle East, (New York Morton Pub. 1982), p.644.

34. Ibid., p.172.

35. Caralo Cardalaro: (1982) Op. cit. p.644.

strata of the society mainly, the Harijans and Tribals. Herein, the conversion has taken place on the mass level. This is due to several reasons. But one of the important reasons is that the lower class people, who were in a psychologically depressed condition under 'Hindu Caste System', found rays of hope from christianity. Their motivation for upper social mobility led them to accept Christianity. The Parias of Tamil Nadu can be cited as an example of such a mass conversion movement.³⁶

Christian Impact on Indian Society in General

Christian mission had a great impact on Indian society, individually, as well as collectively. Initially, missionaries were interested only in changing the individual rather than the society. They believed that conversion to Christianity would bring salvation for the individual and thereby progress for the country as well. And so they concentrated their efforts upon changing belief, attitude, loyalties, habits and personal relationships of the individuals rather than bringing about the social structural changes on a grand scale. Thus, to use Y.Singh's word, they chose to operate in the sphere of 'little tradition' and

36 Pickett, W, Christian mass movement in India (New York: Abindon Press, 1933), p.127.

'micro-structure'.³⁷ The situation, however, changed later. From the individuals it gradually percolated to the whole social artifact.

On its individual level, Christianity brought in an improved and modified socialisation and training process for the converts. Right from the very beginning, the children, who were brought up in Christian atmosphere were oriented to the christian belief, ideals, norms, and practices. All these resulted in the emergence of a new type of personality, considerably different from the traditional one.³⁸ The acceptance of Christian ethics also brought a revolution in their ideational world, view particularly in the religious stance.

Thus, from an implicit faith in their traditional religion they landed into a blank scepticism; they began to reason, think, and question the long standing lingering doubts. A writer rightly remark "The Hindus mind is not only liberal.....but ultra radical...." The issue of Hindus and Hinduism became main topic of many of their debates. The youngster began to renounce their own Hindu religion as corrupt and unworthy. Thus, a writer Rev. L.V. De. observes

37. Webster, C.S. John, The Christian Community and Change in 19th Century in North India. (Meerut: Mc. Million Co. 1986). p.16

38. Ibid., p.483-84.

: "the young Lion of the academy rared out week after week; Down with Hinduism: Down with orthodox! Such rebellious spirit was manifest even in their behaviour. They began to indulge in forbidden food and drink; they began to ridicule their own religion, where they were required to utter mantras or prayer, they repeated lines from the Illiad. There were even some student who cast aside the Brahmanical thread.³⁹

The society for propagating Christian knowledge (S.P.C.K.) in 1819 reported, "As new era of things appear to be rising in the eastern world, light is emerging out of darkness, long rooted prejudices seem by slow, yet perceptible progress to be wearing away". Robertson, one of the missionaries from, Christian Mission Society (CMS) reported in 1819 "an era seem to be drawing upon India's similar to that which prepare the way for the reformation in Europe".⁴⁰ The impact of the new ideas gave a clarion call to the people and paved the path for the renaissance in Bengal. Thus, the Missionaries in India played a significant role in preparing the ground for the renaissance in the country.

39. Sen Gupta K.P. Christian Mission in Bengal (Calcutta: Ferma, K.L. Mukhodayay 1971), p.183.

40. Ibid, p.189.

The Christians, by virtue of their common religious faith were cut off, from the very time of their conversion and baptism from their own community into which they were born. This led to treat them as a separate community within the Indian society. The members of the new community also saw themselves as belonging to a distinct community. The members of this new community got bound together by a common religious faith, membership in the church, involvement with evangelistic, educational and other institution of the church. The relation was so strong that even during the time of calamity they could stand firm.⁴¹ Besides, the converts gradually developed a better understanding of the new faith, and with a greater socialization in Christian way of life, they were in the position to make critical judgement on their traditional practices. As a result they eliminated the practices which were not helpful in maintain a distinction between them and their old communities.⁴²

This newly formed community, in turn, played an important role in changing the basic political and economic structures of the society. Missionaries a major impact upon

41. Webster, C.B. John, (1986) Op.Cit., p.8

42. Sahay K.N Under the Shadow of Cross (Calcutta:Institute of Social Research and Applied Anthropology 1976), p.483-84.

the primary structure of social and cultural life through their intimate interaction with the elites as well as the members of the downtrodden class. With this conversion from old religion to Christianity, their social life witnessed a new developments. The converts gained freedom from the grip of old customs and rituals.

With this religious transformation a new type of social and religious leaders also emerged specially among tribals, such as the Catechist, priest etc. The village church, which was primarily a shrine and place of worship for the converts, became the hub of administrative and congregational activities in these Christian villages. New means of social control began to exist; expulsion from religious organisation became an effective means of social control. The social relation of the people extended beyond their village to their neighbours, even upto the extent of abroad.

On the family level Christianity brought about a new sort of role and relationship among the family members. After marriage the husband and wife no longer remained separate but became one flesh. This gave a solid foundation to the family of the converts and led to a more stable and happy family life. The discrimination between the sexes

disappeared in the family and society-accepting the Biblical view point of men, that "God has created man in his own image"⁴³

Toward the end of 19th century, a new concept of evangelization took place among the Protestant mission. A new concept called 'social gospel' came out from the liberal theologians. The idea was that not only individual but the whole society should be regenerated through Christian love and benevolence.⁴⁴ This type of ideas brought a new policy. Consequently, many social upliftment and philanthropic works were taken up. Most of them were directed toward the lower section of the society. A massive conversion took place from this section. This is termed as "Mass movement". This kind of work of the missionaries alarmed the orthodox sections of Hindu society movements: The Brahma Samaj in East Bengal; The Prarthana Samaj in Bombay, The Depressed Class Mission society of India (1906) in Bombay and The Servant of Indian Society, founded by Gokhale, in 1905,, etc. etc. came into being in the wake of such missionaries movement.⁴⁵

Another noticeable important impact of Christian

43. Ibid, p.485.

44. Pathak, S.M., 'American Missionary and Hinduism in Thapar, R,ed. Tribe, Caste and Religion. (Meerut: Mc. Millan company of India, Ltd. press 1977), p.93.

45. Ibid, p.108.

mission is to be seen among the educated elite class. The young Hindus, who attended the college and University which were founded on western liberal ideas, were influenced by it. The studies of history and political theories of the West indoctrinated this new educated elites, with the ideology of individual freedom and liberty. The visible result of this was they became the agent of Indians national freedom movement which led to formation of Indian National Congress in 1885. Indirectly, this Western liberal ideas also led to the revival of the Hinduism. Many enlightened Hindus realised the necessity of reviving their culture by modifying it. Arya Samaj, founded by Saraswati Dayananda in 1875, with the slogan, "back to Veda", is a clear evidence of this revival movement. The Rama Krishna Mission, founded by Swami Vivekananda in 1877, the Theosophical movement by Madane Blavatsky in 1875 in New York, etc. were other important movements.⁴⁶

The Brahma Samaj, founded by Raja Ram Mohan Roy, was an endeavour to get back to the Upanishadic sources but at the same time it was rationalistic and humanistic. This movement was motivated by the defensive spirit against the joint forces of Christianity and Western rationalisation.

46. Ibid, p.116.

Hence it tried to absorb what was thought to be the best and valid in both.⁴⁷

In this manner, the process of secularisation of religion through re-interpretation of Hinduism took place throughout the 19th century through Christian influences. The secularising trend has been augmenting itself. Sociologists have called it Vicarious "ritualisation". Above all, the Indian elites acknowledges some of their evil institutions like suttee, human sacrifice, child-marriage etc. as a serious social crime and strive to put them down. "Thus today we have a purified and interpreted form of Hinduism" remarked by one sociologist.

In this way, Christianity and Western ideas have brought a lot of changes in Indian mind and outlook. Consequently, it has affected the social, political and economic structures of the country. Thus, Sir Narayan G. Chandavakar, rightly observes "The ideas that lie at the heart of gospel of Christ are slowly but surely permeating every part of Hindu society and modifying every phase of Hindu thought".⁴⁸

47. Saran, A.K, "Western impact on Indian Values", in Thapar, R, ed. (1977) op cit p.125

48. Neill, Stephen, History of Christianity in India (London: Cambridge University press, 1974), p.270-71.

CHAPTER II

NORTH EASTERN TRIBES : SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC ASPECTS

CHAPTER -II

North Eastern Tribes: Socio Demographic Aspects

North East India, politically speaking, consists of seven small states popularly known as the 'seven sisters'. The division of the land into two regions, plains and the hills, is the peculiar geographical feature of this area. According to 1971 census it has the population of 48,449,852, out of which only 4,397,206 are tribals. Thus, North East India has 7.79 per cent of tribal population. While the hilly areas are inhabited by most of them, the plains are occupied by the others.¹

Demographic Structure and Ethnic Composition

The ethnic texture of North East India is very complex. Dr. Bhuban N. Das² calls it the meeting place of the Arya and Dravidan races which came from the West, on the one hand and the Mongoloid race who from the East. Dr. Das further classified the latter on the linguistic ground into two broad families : (i) Austric family, (ii) and Tibeto-

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1. Friends pareira, J.E. 'The Rabhas', Census of Assam, 1971.
 2. "Assamese Culture and the hill people of North-Eastern India" in A Common perspective of North East India in Panbalal Das Gupta, ed. Calcutta, 1967, p.9.

Burman family. Whereas the former includes the Khasis and the latter, which is bigger, includes the rest. According to him the latter can easily be divided further into many sub-branches. The most prominent one among its sub branches is the Bodo. The Kachari, Robha, Koch, Demasa, Lalung all belong to this family. The Nagas, Kuki chin, Adi, Dafla etc. also form an integrated part of this family.

B.B. Goswami divides North East Mongoloid race into three broad families on the basis of its linguistic background. The Mon-Khmer, which includes Khasis and Jaintias, the Tibeto-Burman, which includes Nagas, Chin Kuki, Lushei, Bodo and other tribes of Arunachal Pradesh, and the Siameses Chinese which includes Garos and Ahom found in Meghalaya and Assam respectively. M.G. Goswami³ holds the opinion that the entire region of North East India is predominantly a land of tribemen and women. The only difference is that some are settled in the valleys whereas the others in hills. He continues that most of them came down to the valley and settled there in search of good environment for habitation and this migration trend is increasingly witnessed even at present. Roy Burman also holds the similar

3. Goswami, M.G., "Tribe-Peasant relationship in Assam' in Panbalal Das Gupta ed. A common Perspective of North East p.72. (Calcutta : 1966).

views. He maintains that the entire Mongoloid stock of North East India originated either in Tibet or in South China from where they entered into India via Burma.⁴

S.T. Das,⁵ a socio-demographer, in his book Tribal life of North East India classifies the tribals of North East region into two groups in accordance with its geographical habitat : (i) those who lived in the Brahmaputra Valley, Manipur Plateau and Tripura plain; (ii) and those who lived in the hilly forest area --- the tribe of Nagaland, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam and Manipur hills. Although this categorisation is based on the geographical location, yet it corresponds to the differences in their cultural characteristics. Whereas the tribals of the hilly area are isolated, the tribals of the valley have been living with other non-tribal communities since time. As a result, there has been a process of acculturation between the tribals and the non-tribals. In view of this he concludes that Assamese culture is a synthesis of the mongoloid from the East and the Aryan migrants from the West.

4. Burman, Roy "Integrated area approach to the problem of the hill tribe of North East India" in K.S. Singh ed. The Tribal situation in India, (Simla : Indian Institute of advance studies, 1962) p.73.

5. Das, S.T. Tribal Life of North East India (Calcutta: Gian Publication, 1968), p.3.

Moreover, it is found that there existed some kinds of trade relationships between the tribals and the non-tribals of the plains. The tribals of Naga-hill, Meghalaya, Arunachal used to go down to Assam Valley to exchange their goods, for example, cotton with gold. Because of this constant trade interaction acculturation took place between the tribals and non-tribals. The Assamese culture has adopted the ideas, beliefs and institutions of the neighbouring Mongoloid population and at same time the tribals of the hill have unconsciously adopted the non-tribal culture.⁶ The presence of broken Assamee among the Nagas, the existence of temples among the tribals especially the Koch in Meghalaya are some of the evidences of non-tribal cultural influence on them. The short, there is a process of what Ghurye⁷ calls "integrative assimilation" of tribal and non-tribal cultures in North East India.

The percentage of tribal population in North East region varies from state to state. The table below gives some ideas of its distribution in different states⁸.

6. Mishra (P.K.), "Pattern of inter tribal relation" in Dube (SC) Tribal heritage of India (New Delhi, Vikas - 1977), p.67.

7. Ghurye (G.S), The Schedule Tribe, (Bombay Popular Prakashan, 1963) p. 21.

8. J.E. 'The Rabhas' Census of Assam, 1971.

Table 1

State	Total Population in 1971	Schedule Tribe	% of ST Population
Assam	43,502,703	1,667,657	3.81
Meghalaya	1,072,753	334,446	31.18
Tripura	1,556,342	450,544	28.15
Nagaland	516,449	457,602	88.48
Arnuachal Pradesh	469,511	369,408	79.02
Mizoram	332,390	313,290	94.26

Table 2

Table two shows the member of the three major tribes and their distribution in different states in more detail manner

Tribes	States	No. Population	Total No.
NAGAS	Nagaland	650885	728879
	Manipur	167905	
	Arnuachal Pradesh	10760	
GAROS KHASIS	Meghalaya	1076345	1076345
MIZOS	Mizoram	46197	552616
	Manipur	90701	

SOURCE: HASSAN NADEEM , Tribes India (New Delhi Harman Publication, 1988) (based on 1988 census)

This table shows that GARO & Khasis stands highest in term of number then Nagas, distributed in three states, (Manipur, Nagland, and Arunachal Pradesh) Mizos, distributed in Mizoram and Manipur, comes^{the} least.

Important Common Features of North East Tribal

Tribals in india have their own distinct culture, and social system. They are married within their restricted local groups - sometime being guided by their elders or the political chiefs. These tribals prove themselves to be a socially distinct community in contrast to their neighbour. This view of N.K. Bose⁹ even equally applies to North East tribals too. Despite the existing variations from tribe to tribe, there are certain basic common features that distinguish them clearly from other neighbouring non-tribal community.

One of the most important features of North East tribals is exogamy. Usually member of each of the clan marry outside of it. On no account a man is permitted to take a wife from his own clan, or from a clan which is regarded as

9. Bose N.K. Tribal Life in India (Delhi) : (National Book Trust, Delhi 1971) p. 4.

fratenude¹⁰. Inter-tribal marriages are not taken so seriously. A Naga can marry a Lushie and a Khasi can marry a Garo and so on and so forth. But the breach of the clan's law is considered to be a serious social crime. Except Khasi and Garo the others have a partrialinal family. It is also found that polygamy too was very common among the North East tribals.¹¹.

A village is the basic unit of political structure whereas a clan is the basic unit of overall social structure. The chief of the eldest clan in the village normally becomes the head of the village. it was possible because, sometimes even a single clan formed a village. However, the headman called 'Ganbura' was normally not an autocratic ruler. He ruled with the help and consent of his secretaries who were elected by the villagers. However, this practice varies from tribe to tribe. The political organisation of North East tribals can be classified into two broad categories : (1) authoritarian type and (2) republican type. The first one prevailed among the Garos and Lushies, Koryaks, Semas, and Chang. The second one

10. Mills J.S. : The A. Nagas (Bombay:Oxford University Press, 1973), p.69.

11. Elwin, V. A Philosophy of NEFA, (Shillong 1059), p.60.

prevailed among the Angamis. The Khasis and Aos have a different type of model. In Khasi's political organization the chieftain's position was more or less similar to that of constitutional monarch. Ao's political organisation, however, falls somewhere between the authoritarian and the republican.¹²

The dormitory hall of unmarried youths, which Roy Burman¹³ calls "Age group organisation", is an important feature of North East tribal culture. Different tribes have given different names to it, for example, the Nagas calls it "Morung", Lushu's, "Zoulbuk", Garos "Nokpate", Mikis "Mro". This institution played an important role in the integration of the clan and communities of diverse origins. Through such institutions young people, who belonged to different groups, were organised for diverse economic and political roles in the village community. The younger groups of the village were trained and prepared for war through this institution.

Head hunting and raiding, too, were an important feature of tribal culture. It is found that some tribes were practicing them till early fifties. Different tribes have different motives and purpose behind these practices. For Nagas it is said that this practice had relation with their agriculture. The Nagas firmly held that if more heads were brought to the village it would augment the fertility of the

12. Burman, Roy. 'Integrated Area Approach to the Problems of the Hills Tribes,' in Singh ed.(1986) The Triba Situation in India p.73.

13. Ibid. p.75

land and consequently production would go up.¹⁴ Garos, however, practiced it as a some sort of revenge against their enemies, who were mainly Bengali. The latter used to exploit them economically. Among the Kukis, it was practiced mainly to show off their manliness.

Like any other tribals, if the Indian sub-continent the North East tribals were also animist. They believed in the existence of a Supreme Being, who controlled the universe and guided the life on it.¹⁵ Their nature of worship or ritual, however, differs from tribe to tribe. For instance, Khasi did not practice idol worship. They claimed that their religion was the only true religion better than any other.¹⁶ The common character they all shared was the sacrifice of animal or bird to appease the evil spirits, who, they believed, caused all sorts of natural calamities.

As regards their domestic life, although some common pattern runs through all the hills - tribes, they were not without local variations. For instance, Garo spent

14. Shimray R.S. Origin and Culture of Nagas, (Delhi 1985), p. 251

15. Baveta J.D. Across the Golden Heights of Assam and NEFA, (Shillong, Modern Book Depot, 1961), p.135.

16. Natarajan, N, Missionary among the Khasis (New Delhi, Sterline Publisher, 1977) p.43.

most of their time in giving (or refusing) and demanding Dai (compensation). The marriage custom and inheritance law were different from tribe to tribe. Both the Garo and the Khasis had matriarchal system whereas the other tribes, Kuki, Lushei, Nagas have patriarchal system.¹⁷

The nature of relationship among them was mainly based on the principle of circulation which depended heavily on their social structure. Further this principle is based on reciprocity and the pre-supposition of the world view which is entirely different from that of money market situation prevailing in the modern times. Regarding this Roy Berman observes :

"The locally linked up tribal entities of NEFA allowed the organised state to operate (in) their sphere of influence without directly confronting each other and at the same time to ensure that commodities to transact from one area to another took place, though adverse but fairly on a largely stable system or regulation of perpetual flux in their external relationship and were not integrated into a single polity."¹⁸

17. Das, S.T., Op. cit. p. 46.

18. Burman, Roy, Op. cit, p.75.

Till now we have tried to examine some of the common features of the important tribes notably, Naga, Lusheis, Khasi and Jaintia and Garos. It is evident that though there are many common basic features, there are also many local variation. These are briefly discussed below:

NAGA

NAGAS are one of the major tribe belonging to Tibeto-Burman family. They are mainly inhabiting the present Naga land. Besides, their presence is also found in other states such as Manipur, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and even in Burma. Naga social life is centred around the clan which is composed of several families. Naga has partiarchal society. Here the lines of succession goes through the male line, usually through the eldest son.

One of the distinct character of Naga society is the social position of the woman - her position is comparatively honorable. She is not confined only to domestic work but she also participates even in public gatherings, like annual feastings. She joins in dancing, singing with the men without any prohibition.¹⁹ Regarding the Naga women's position Haimendorf has observed:

19. Horam, M, Social and Cultural Life of Nagas, (Delhi: BR, publishing corporation, 1977), p.81.

"Many women in the world civilized part of India may will envy the women of Naga Hills, their high status and free and happy life and if you measure the cultural level of the people by their social position and personal freedom of its women you will think twice before looking down on Nagas as savage"²⁰.

A village was its basic political unit. Each village was an independent sovereign democratic or autocratic state, depending upon the tribe. Horam has observed that Naga society presents a varied pattern of near-dictatorship to extreme democracy. The Konyak's chiefs like 'Ang' were almost like dictators. He was like demi-God and some time was considered to be the sacred head. His words become the law of the village. On the other hand, there were also extremely democratic that J. H. Hutton has remarked : "it is difficult to imagine in view of their popular independence of character, how their village had held together at all before the coming of the British government"²¹. Such type of political system is not found in other tribes.

20. Haimendorff, F.O. The Naked Naga, (Calcutta : Thecker Co. 1983) p.49.

21. Elwin, V, A Philosophy of NEFA (Shillong : Government Assam Press, 1969) p.240.

Bachelors' dormitory and head hunting were also two important culture activities of Nagas. Shimray²² has called the dormitory hall Naga school in view of its functions. He says that though there was not any formal educational institution like today, this institution trained the youths to successfully tackle their future life. Many scholars have accepted this view. Those who were trained in this institution turned out to be perfect citizens of the village. They had the sense of sacrifice and service for the others. Nagas practiced head hunting for two reasons : firstly, to prove themselves as a great warrior and thereby attracted many girls. Secondly, to enhance the fertility of soil and increase production.²³

KHASIS AND GAROS

Khasis and Garos are the two major tribes who lived in Meghalaya state. Though at present they were politically belonged to the same state, they originally belonged to a different family. The former belongs to Mon-Khmar family and the latter belongs to Siamese Chinese. One noticeable strange thing, however, is that though they

22. Shimray R.S. (1986) op. cit. p.220-21

23. Ibid, p. 225.

originated in a different family, they surprisingly share one important common feature, matrilineal family system. The normal family life is found centred around the mother. The youngest daughter inherits the property of the parents. After marriage men go to their wives' household and live over there. On account of this, Khasi and Garo women are held in high esteem in their society; and they actively participate in all the activities of the village. It is found that they participate even in war and prove themselves to be very brave. The youngest daughter is usually assigned the priestly duties; she acts as a priest for the family at the time of sacrificial ceremonies to appease God. The maternal uncle acts as a councillor and a guardian to the children and plays a vital role in promoting their welfares.²⁴ Divorce often occurs among both the Khasis and the Garos. Among the Khasis barrenness, adultery and incompatibility of temperament²⁵ caused divorce, whereas in the Garos it was due to non-cooperation between a wife and a husband in the family matters.

Garos strongly believed in the existence of Supreme Creator, God, and also in the multitude of spirits. They

24. Natarajan, N, op.cit., p. 19.

25. Chakrabarty, M. and Mukherjee, D., Indian Tribes (Calcutta, Saraswati Pub. 1971), p.36.

call this creator 'Tatara - Rabuga'. They firmly believe that in (Tatara - Rabuga) has created the universe. The other spirit (they believed to exist is) called Muties, supposed to be present in every nook and corner of this creation. Garos do not sacrifice animal or bird to this supreme God because they believe that he is benevolent. Thus, he does not cause any harm to them. However, sacrifice is made to a multitude of spirits thinking that these spirits often cause harm to them and so to pacify them is essential. Their main objects of worship are the sun and the moon.²⁶

On the other hand Khasis' religion seems to be more similar to Christianity. They believe that religion is God's given, and that duty of man is to reach to their Almighty. This is possible through the prayer, through ceremonies performed during the baptism of a child, and also through crematorial rituals after death. They believe that in order to please God one should avoid all evils like stealing, cheating, backbiting etc. they do not believe in the priestly hierarchy. They claim that their religion is the supreme and the only true one.²⁷

26. Sangma, Milton, History and Culture of Garos (Delhi R.K. Jain 1981) p.16.

27. Natarajan, N. (1977) op.cit p. 43-4.

There is no evidence of Khasis practicing head-hunting or raiding, but Garos are found to be practicing this. They often raided the neighbouring Bengalis to revenge them for their economic exploitation. Some believed that Garo raided the neighbours because of their mere love to possess human head, but this theory is not acceptable. Another group believe that Garos practiced raiding for sacrifices of human heads to their God. However, this theory is also not fully acceptable because there is example evidence that Garos sacrificed human beings to their God.

MIZO

Mizos are another major tribe of North East. They are mainly concentrated at present in Mizoram. Initially this tribe was called Lushei. They belong to the family of Tibeto-Burman. They are believed to have migrated from South Burma.

Mizos are very simple, honest and able people. The most distinct character of their social system is the chief's autocratic rule. The chief is called "Lab". Only he had the power to distribute the land to the villagers for farming. In return, he was entitled to take tax from them. The chief used to keep a few slaves who were generally the orphans brought up in his house. The Lushei, under their chief, had no power and could not do away with the chief

even if they did not want him. The only thing they could do was to migrate to other village and change their chief.²⁸

Like other tribe, Lushei believed in the supreme creator named 'Pathian'. They believed that the creator had no time to look after the men and women created. As a result a number of evil spirits and demons got a change to cause misery to His people. Mizos' acts of sacrifice involving animals and birds were intended to appease the evil spirits. Lushei believed that the spirits of hunters and warriors migrated to heaven in comfort and were reborn quickly. This belief demonstrates their spirit of adventure and bravery.²⁹ It would not be wrong to maintain that Mizos' practice of head-hunting and raiding arises from this logic.

The practice of exorcism was very common among the Mizos. In each Village there was a witch who had the power to drive away the evil spirits from men and women villagers used to approach her for conducting during the time of crisis in the family.³⁰ The social status of Mizo women was very low compared to the women in other tribes. They did

28. Baveta, J.D., p. 48.

29. Ibid, p.47.

30. Van, H, John (1975) Church and Political Upheaval in Mizoram, p.5.

almost all the domestic and farming chores. It is said that the women got up early morning before the dawn and went to bed only at late night and took care of all the household and children as well. When the mother dies after giving birth, the child was also buried with the mother. The logic behind this was the Mizo believed the ghost of the mother would harm the person who would keep the child. Like other tribe, Mizo's also used to have youth dormitory hall called 'Zaul buk'. The purpose of this was to give entertainment to them and to train them to be successful warriors.³¹

Beginning of Christian Work

Willilam Carey, A Baptist missionary from England, was the first person who opened the Christian mission among North East Tribals for the first time in 1813. Carey sent his first convert, Krishna Chandra Pal, to work among the Khasis. He stayed over there for nearly eight months and returned to Calcutta. It is said that during his study over there Chandra Pal converted some local people.

After a gap of nearly decades, in 1837 the Khasi hill was taken up by the Welsh Presbyterian mission. Thomas

31. Ibid., p.9

Jone and his wife were the first missionaries. They arrived at Cheerapunji and the first thing they did was to reopen the school that had already been established by the Baptist mission. It is said that by the time this mission arrived, Khasi hill was already ripe enough for the gospel work. Therefore, as soon as Thomas and his family arrived many people came to meet them and requested to teach them Roman script. For the first time Mr. Thomas Jone introduced Roman script to Khasi language. In 1842, two more missionaries, William Lewis and Owen Richard, arrived in the Khasi hills. By their efforts Khasi literature, such as First Khasi reader, my mother's gift, The Learning of Christianity, etc. were published. The gospel of St. Mathew and Hymns were interpreted in Khasi in 1846, and 1843 respectively. The first two Khasi converts were Mr. Umar and U. Rujon. They underwent Baptism in 1846.

The mission work in Khasi hills progressed faster than any other area at that particular time. By 1849 there were more than 19 Khasi converts but in 1880, surprisingly the number rose to 1659 and spread to more than seven main stations and 16 more substations.³² In 1895 already five

32. Multumana Mathew : Christian in Assam: Inter-faith dialogue, (Pune : Satprakashan Samachar Kendra, 1984) p.30-1.

Presbyterians were already created at Sohra-Shilla, Shillong, Mawrai, Mawphlang, Mairaing, Jawai Shangsung and Ri Khar. Thus, by the end of the century there were more than 14215 native converts.³³

The first missionary among the Garos was Mr. Valentine William Hurley, a doctor. He was first~~ly~~ appointed as a headmaster of a government aided school but later he became a full time missionary. Soon after Mr. Fen Wish, a Baptist mission, also joined them. The first two converts from this school were two brothers, Omed Momin and his nephew Ramkhe Momen. They were Baptised by Dr. Brownson³⁴ on 8th February 1863. Later, these two brothers also became full time missionaries and worked among their own tribes. Their contribution toward Garos mission work is very important. The first Church in Garo was established in 1867 by Brown.

On the 20th January, 1871, a mission headquarters was established at Tura, and it became the mission centre for Garos. By the end of 1911 there were already 17 independent churches with the total member of 5314.³⁵

33.Ibid

34. He was a American missionary, stationed in Gauhati at that time. At the request of the two brothers he Baptise them.

35. Sangma (milton), p. 216.

The mission work in Lushei hills (now Mizoram) was the extension of Welsh Presbyterian mission in Khasi and Jaintia hills. Reverent William William started the ground of mission there. Soon after, on his appeal at Home Board at Lever Pool, more missionaries were sent and Lushei Hill became their mission field in 1892.³⁶ However, the mission field was soon taken over by Arthington mission under the mission of Mr. J.H. Lorrain and Mr., F.W. Savidge. The mission field was taken over again by the former mission. Welsh Presbyterian however, appointed Mr. Jones as a full time missionary.³⁷ He established many schools and preached the gospel in course of imparting education to the masses.

Two events are worth mentioning regarding the progress of mission work in Lushei hills. The First one; the first Lushei chief was converted into Christianity after he had a vision in dream. Like many other parts of Indian he was followed by all his subjects. The Second is the revival which occurred in Europe and America during the first half of the 19th century affected the Lushei hill mission work. Some of those young revivalist came to Meghalaya and through them it reached to Mizoram. Many young people were touched -

36. Dena, Lal Christian mission and colonialism (Shillong : Vandrame Institute 1988), p. 99.

37. Ibid, p. 45

by this revival spirit and mass conversion was taken place. As a result, within a short span of time the pace of conversion increased to an unexpected number. By 1961 the number of the Christians in Mizoram rose to 228,577 out of its total population of 263,877³⁸.

Reverend MRS. Nathan Brown and MRS. O.T. Cutter were the first American Baptist missionary in Assam. They came at Sadiya in 1836 to take up mission work over there. Later on they left Sadiya and established their missionary's headquarter at Jaipur. While they were there they got the vision to serve the neighbouring wild tribe, Nagas. In January 1839, Rev. Brownson visited Namsang, (a Naga village now in Tibet frontier division). In 1840 Brownson alongwith his family went to Namsang to live over there. They stayed there for nearly six months and established a school.³⁹ It is believed that during their stay three may people started learning the Roman script.

After a gap of a decade the mission work in Naga hill was taken up by reverent W. Clark who came to Sibasagar to be a missionary in Assam (1861). In 1871, Clark sent

38. Maltumana, Mathew, (1984), op.cit 35-6.

39. Brownson and family left the village because of the serious sickness of his sister and wife. Soon after they died in Jaipur.

Godhula, an Assamese to enquire the mission work in the Naga hills. Godhula found the Naga hill to be ripe for the gospel. So, on the 18th December, 1872 Dr. Clark and Mr. Godhula along with the whole family reached to Haimong to establish the mission work over there.⁴⁰ A mission headquarter and a church were establish in Mongyemchen. That time the number of converts was already 79, out of nothing. Later on, in 1873, the mission headquarter shifted to Impur.

In 1885 Dr. S.W. Reverburge joined the mission work with Dr. Clark. In the same year Rev. S. Parrain and F. Hagger also joined with them. Soon after, Clark directed the mission work toward Angami area. Rev. C.D. King was sent to Kohima and to start a mission school over there with the help of an Assamese convert, Paharam. Later, Clark directed his mission toward Wakha Lotha area, by sending Winter as an incharge of the work. Winter, however, due to his ill health, could not carry out the assignment successfully. Thus, the Wakha mission carried out under the care of Kohima mission for a long time.⁴¹

40. Alemchiba M, Ao ed. A brief historical account of Nagaland (Naga institute of culture, Kohima, 1970), p.155.

41. Barpujari, H.K., American Missionaries in North East Indian (1886-1900 A.D.). (Gauhati: Spectrum Publication 1986), p. 240

TABLE 3
SIZE, GROWTH AND DISTRIBUTION OF CHRISTIAN POPULATION IN NORTH EAST INDIA 1951-81

	MEGHALAYA				NAGALAND				MIZORAM				INDIA		
	No. of Christ	Decadal growth (%)	% of Chris to total popu. in state	Spetial Dist. of christ India level	No. of Christ	Decadal gr. (%)	% of christ to total pop.	Spatial distri. of christ on India level %	No. of christ	Decadal growth (%)	% of christo total popu. in state	Spetial Dist. of christ India level	No. of christ	Decadal gr. (%)	% of chri to total pop
1951	149378		22.66 %	1.69 %	98068		46.04	1.169 %	—				8393734		2.34
1961	270912	81 %	35.21	2.526	195588	99.44	52.97	1.824	—				10723560	27.8	2.44
1971	475267	76 %	46.97	3.341	344798	76.28	66.76	2.424	413				14223382	32.6	2.59
1981	702854	48%	52.61	4.348	621590	80.27	80.21	3.845	840	103%	83%	2.561	16165447	13.6	2.43

Source: Indian Meteorological Review Vol. 11, No. 2., April, 1989.

From that time onwards the mission work continued to grow till 1950s. But from 1950s onwards the Nagaland Church became an independent church. During the following decade, i.e. 1952-62, the number of the members of the Baptist mission increased to 56,272 and 76,840 respectively. In 1971, the number of Baptist Christian also increased to 2,470,67 covering 5\60 per cent of the total population.⁴²

The given table shows the size, growth and distribution of Christian Population in North East Indian.

42. Duraiswamy, S. Christianity in India, (Madras: Christian Literature Centre, 1986). p.46.

Chapter-III

SOCIO-HISTORICAL DIMENSIONS OF CHRISTIANITY IN THE NORTH-EAST

Chapter-III

SOCIO-HISTORICAL DIMENSIONS OF CHRISTIANITY IN THE NORTH-EAST

A. A Brief Account of its Genesis in India

Christianity is not an alien religion in India. Though its exact advent in the country is uncertain the fact that st. Thomas, one of the Apostles of Jesus, came to the southern India and preached the gospel sometime around the middle of first century is undisputed. It is said that he arrived at king Gundapharus' palace and was given the job of constructing the palace. Later on, he established seven churches and appointed one priest.¹ In this way, Thomas opened up the Christian in India.

The next phase of Christian mission which came to India was the Portuguese. It is recorded that Vasco da Gama, who made his voyage in 1498 to India, accompanied by two priests reached Cochin and began their mission work. The first church was built and dedicated to St. Bortholomeo. After some time the next fleet arrived consisting of the Vicar secular priest Franciscan, an organist, a chorist and one lay brother under the leadership of Cabral. Again in 1503, Albuquerque, a missionary, arrived alongwith five

1. Neill, Stephen, History of Christianity in India (London: Cambridge University press 1984).p.127.

Dominicans, one of them was Fr. Rodrigo who was assigned the charge of Thomas Christians.² During this period Franciscans were known to be the real Christian missionaries who had the desire to preach the gospel in India. They served as chaplains to the Portuguese and at the same time preached the gospel to the 'heathens'. The most notable leader among them was Henry de Coimbra who founded his residences in Goa and Cochin and established the mission works. Their mission expanded again with the arrival of twelve Friars under the leadership of Antony de Loure. He is regarded to be the real founder of Franciscan mission work in India.³

The Jesuits, who arrived toward the middle of the 16th century intensified the mission during that period. St. Francis Xavier who arrived on the 6th May, 1542 was one of their most notable leaders. As soon as he arrived, he visited, Vicar General Michael, and also Vaz Countentro the register of the colony Cosme Anes and established a cordial relationship with them.⁴ Xavier was a very humble and zealous man. He visited the prisons and planted hope in the hearts of the condemned prisoners. He preferred to stay in the hospitals with the sick, so that he could make his

2. Ibid. p.113.

3. Ibid. p.119-120

4. Ibid. p.125

services available to them all the time. Even the lepers in the hospitals were not beyond his reach.⁵

Francis Xavier was the first Christian missionary to translate some Christian literatures into the native Tamil language.⁶ It is said that Xavier even performed miracles. To take an instance in the village of Coimbatore where Xavier was once about to begin a prayer meeting a sobbing crowd brought a virtually dead boy taken out from a well. Xavier knelt down and prayed, briefly over him read a verse from the scriptures then took him by the hand and asked him in the name of Jesus to stand up. At once, the boy stood up and opened his eyes. Many were impressed by such work and became Christian.

Though the mission work at that time seemed to be very insignificant compared to vast population of India, nevertheless it laid the foundation of future mission work. People might have had reservation to join Christian fold, yet the Christian influences got extended even outside the Christian community. This paved the way for later Protestant mission.⁷

Though St. Thomas and Portuguese Christians arrived very early, they could not spread in all parts of

5. Ibid. p.139

6. Ibid.p.144

7. Sen Gupta, K.P., The Christian Missionaries in Bengal (Calcutta: Ferma, Munhodyay 1971), p.5

India, their work remained confined only to South India. The real Evangelical work began only during the 18th century with the coming of American and European (England) Protestant missions.

In the 18th century England religious corruption was at its zenith. At this juncture a new revival came under the leadership of two brothers, John Wesley and Charles Wesley. They met a young Moravian missionary, Peter Bolher, and formed a new association called "Moravian Brothers". This was the first Protestant association (organisation) which recognised the necessity of evangelisation as an important part of their duty. It inaugurated the modern Protestant missionary movement (1732). And it exerted a great influence on all Protestant missions which were arising at the same time in Europe. The Protestant mission in India was an outcome of this movement.

Initially, the British had no intention of evangelizing India but in order to meet their religious needs chaplains were brought to India. Their activities, however, were confined only to the European Community. Later, the situation was changed when David Brown arrived in Bengal in 1776, and initiated the idea of evangelism in India. Consequently, at this instance the first missionary, Rev. John Zacharia Kiarnandar from Proyol Danish mission,

was brought to India in 1705. When the French became the ruler and Robert Clive became the Governor General, he was invited to Bengal in 1758. The first Protestant Church called "House of Prayer" was constructed.⁸ Rev. Zacharia was followed by a Medical missionary Dr. Thomas. He was later appointed as a full time missionary. He returned to England in 1792 to appeal to the people to send more missionaries to the country. As a result, many missionaries began to arrive and started preaching the Gospel here.⁹

Among the missionaries, who played the most important role in evangelism was William Carey, sent by British missionary society (M.M.S.). He arrived in Calcutta in 1793 with his family. Due to some difficulty in Calcutta they were shifted to countryside, about 30 km, away from the city. There, Carey became Superintendent in an indigo factory at Madnabati near Malda. Later, he was joined up by four other missionaries sent from England. After their arrival, Carey shifted his residence to Serampore and started his mission work in full swing along with these people under the protection of Danish Flag. Later, in 1818 Serampore Theological college was established. The main purpose of the college was to train the young natives to

8. Ibid, p.16

9. Ibid, p.20

spread the gospel in their own land.¹⁰ The first (native) convert was Chandra Pal who was sent as the first missionary to North East to work among the Khasis.

London Missionary society also sent its first missionary, Rev. Nathaniel Forsyth, to Bengal in 1798. Later Mr. R. May was also sent to assist Rev. Nathaniel Forsyth. They established their head-quarter in Calcutta. Later on, they extended their mission work to Bhawanipore and from there they controlled the Southeren part of the city.

Few years later, 'The Church Missionary Society' (C.M.S.) also began their mission work in Bengal through corresponding committee (1807). The Committee consisted of the Chaplains of the company, and other government officers who had missionary zeal. The first batch of their missionary came to Calcutta in 1817 and Burdwan became their mission headquarter. Later they extended their centre to Mirzapore, and Calcutta also.¹¹ Besides it the other missionary societies were, the Wesley Methodist mission; (W.M.M.S.), the Church of Scotland (CS), and the Netherlands Missionary Society (N.M.S.).¹²

10. Ibid. p.32-33.

11. Ibid. p.38

12. Ibid. p.41

The Charter Act of 1813, is an important episode in the history of missionary movement in India. Prior to this, though there were many missionaries, they were under the control of the Government. But this Act granted free-hand to mission in India. After this Act, the Protestant missionary work picked up its real pace. Thus, the year 1813 is regarded as the beginning of "Modern Mission" in India. In 1910 there were more than 1800 missionaries.¹³

Except for some of Jesuits who had visited Akbar's Court during 15th century there was no Christian mission in North India, prior to the 19th Century. The actual missionary work began here only when the missionaries were sent by Great Britain and the United States following the Charter Act of 1813. The Church of England was the first Christian mission to send missionaries over here. They established their mission headquarters in Agra, Meerut, Banaras, and Gorakhpur in U.P. between 1809 to 1825. The other Church which had its mission in this area was the American Church.

Social Transformation through Christianization

The concept of Church can be easily understood only when it is compared and contrasted with other similar

13. Pathak, S.M. 'American Missionaries and Hinduism' in Thapar, (R), ed. Caste, Tribe and Religion. (Meerut: Mc Millan Company India Ltd. 1977). p.25.

equal phenomena like sect, denomination etc.

Sociologists have defined Church as an ecclesiastical organisation whose membership is based on ascription. It is different from other institutions because of its certain peculiar characteristics such as, its membership based on birth, hierarchical structure, dogmatic tendency, inclusiveness of its social structure, and finally it has a tendency to compromise and adjust with the secular activities of the world.

Sect, too, is an ecclesiastical organisation but its membership, unlike the Church, is based on free choice or selection. It also has certain distinctive characteristics; its membership is based on selection or voluntary choice, its social structure is of exclusive nature, it has a separatist tendency of defiance or withdrawal from the world, and due emphasis on conversion prior to obtaining its primary membership, etc. Further, sect is ascetic; it rejects the hierarchy and endeavours to practice the priesthood of believers in an egalitarian social organisation. Denomination, however, is an advanced stage of a sect. It has a more liberal and flexible character and so it adjusts itself with the worldly secular activities and exists together with them.¹⁴

14. Odea, Thomas, Sociology and Study of Religion (London: INC Publishers 1969).

In true sense of the term the Churches in North East are not the exact outcome of its counterparts in Europe. As is already discussed in section the (A brief account of genesis of christianity in India) North East churches are the fruits of sectarian movements in Europe during the 18th century. Therefore, when it came to North East, it came under different denominations like English Baptist mission; American Baptist mission, Welsh Presbyterian Mission etc. But as the time went on, different sects lost their original characteristics when they attempted to set up organisation in order to carry out the mission works properly. Today the different sects are known in term of denominations because of their changed character. Due to many factors, sects have compromised and adjusted with the secular worldly activities.

In the long run sects and denominations also have gradually lost their original characteristics and have returned to the church. The criteria of membership based on birth, the tendency of heirarchical administration, inclusiveness of social structure etc. have reappeared in these sects. It, therefore, would not be improper to use the term 'Church' for the sects and denomination of christian religion in North East India.

Conversion is an inner experience either in one person or in a group involving change in belief, ideas, values, and personalities to reorganise and reorient the person or the persons emotional and intellectual outlooks. Though this is a personal issue of an individual it encompasses one's or community's each and every aspect of life. Thereby, the process of conversion leads to the theory of social change.¹⁵ Christianity, as a faith, brought changes not only in the form of worship and basic religious beliefs but also in values, idea and outlooks which have an effect on almost every aspect of a person's day-to-day life and social demeanor. Therefore, the conversion has a great social implication. As a first step, the converted person begins to have a new attitude and responsibility to others.

The assurance of being saved makes the person work hard even in this world. The price that he/she has to pay for it is to "do all the fathers commandment" which includes even change in direction and purpose of life. In other words, accepting God's love means leaving behind his past human ambition and becoming an instrument of god.¹⁶

The redemptive experience of the newly assumed religion imparts a new consciousness which finally leads to

15. Dena, L.(1988) Christian Mission and Colonealism op.cit.p.86

16. Downs, F.S., Christianity in North Eastern India (Delhi : ISPCK Pub. 1983). p.229.

a true self or personal identity equipping the converts psychically to confront outer circumstances and traditions. The purpose of life is to preserve his soul under God's grace through prayer, work and evangelising others. This 'evangelisation' has resulted in various radical changes in the many other aspects of th society. Therefore, N.E. Perry rightly asserts:

"A more active instrument of change is a Christian mission."¹⁷

Perry's observation holds much water as far as North East tribal society is concerned. The British Government, though simultaneously worked together with the missionaries, could not bring any significant transformation in the society. As long as the tribals did not disturb their commercial activities they left them (tribals) as they were. The Christian missionaries, however, interfered in each and every aspect of their personal as well as social life in order to bring them out from the shackles of their traditional social structure and "heathen life, and tried to install in them a new way of life based on the ethics of Christian belief. Hence, they spared no effort to eradicate the animistic beliefs and practices among the North Eastern tribals.

17. Perry, N.E. The Lakhers, (London: McMillan 1932).p.19.
Missionaries imposed all sorts of restriction on

their life like rice beer drinking, animal sacrifice, dancing, music even traditional wood curving and weaving etc. As a result the tribals old custom and superstition that had guided their lives for the past many years came to an end.¹⁸ Thus, M.M. Thomas has rightly commented: "For the tribals, Christianity came as a liberator from spiritual and social demons".¹⁹ The Phrase 'spiritual and social demons' refers to the superstitious, beliefs and customs. Alemchiba, has also said; "Christianity liberated the people (tribals) from the world view in which they were socially and psychologically enslaved by fear of spirit. Belief in spirit continues but it is no longer dominant thing that it once was. Christ power was seen to be creator than that of spirit".²⁰

The introduction of written literature led the tribals to read the Bible, and drove out the ignorance of fatalistic and superstitious belief in their animistic worship. This also removed the feeling of remoteness of the region from outside world. Consequently, it helped them to break their closed clan or tribe centre traditional community and

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18. Quarishi, Ferdaus. A., Christianity in North Eastern Hill of Asia. (Dhaka: University Press 1987). p.35
 19. This quotation is from Ray, Anemesh, (1978) Mizoram a dynamic of change.
 20. Quoted from Downs F.S., (1983) Christ. in N.E. India

build a new one based on modern ideas and value system.²¹ Further, this modern education served to produce new leaders in the society. This new educated group, being enlightened, began to realise their own identity for the first time. This resulted various movements among the North Eastern ethnic groups to affirm their own identity. The Modern political movement was also indirectly the outcome of it though it was not the intention of the missionaries or Church leaders.²² Besides, the young educated people began to despise their old customs, and traditions and instead preferred the Western values. It, thus, paved way for "denationalisation"²³

The introduction of Roman script also inculcated Western ideas, values and thoughts in people's mind. Regarding this one writer observes: "Missionaries assimilated Khasis into Western civilization by Romanising the script of Khasi language. If European had done little good as missionaries they had brought the Cream of Western civilization, even to the entire of Khasi land".²⁴

In tribal traditional world view religion and

21. Ibid. p.277.

22. Ibid. p.281.

23. "Denationalisation" Negative change in attitude of the Tribal youngsters toward their own customs and traditions.

24. Mathur, PRG, The Khasis of Meghalaya (Calcutta: Cosmo Publication 1971), p.41.

sickness were inseparable. Illness was believed to be due to the displeasure of an evil spirit. Therefore, in order to overcome this, they sacrificed animals, birds etc. to the concerned evil spirit. But when the missionaries brought the modern medicine to cure their illness, they began to disregard their gods, their superstitious belief in evil spirit and sacrifice to it began to decline. In other words, this introduction of modern medicine changed their outlook and attitude to sickness and other natural calamities. They accepted the new religion and became a new community. Dr. Crozer, a medical doctor missionary, who worked among the Lusheis has remarked: "It is definitely known that many heathens are giving up their fear of evil spirit and sacrificing custom directly through this agent".²⁵

A new socio political relationship among the neighbouring villages began to prevail. Warfare between the neighbouring village which had been a way of life for the young people was replaced by love and concern for each other. The old clan-centre community was replaced by a new community centre around the church organisation. This new development was seen clearly in the intensive evangelical activities undertaken by the Christianised tribe among other tribes. The Assamese became the first evangelist for Nagas,

25. Anemesh, Ray, (1978), Mizoram: dynamic of change, .p.65

and the Khasis did the same for the Lusheis. In this way the social relationship among the tribals and their attitude to each other underwent a massive change from hatred and enmity to love and cooperation.²⁶

Conflict Between New Religion and Old Belief, Custom, Traditions

Christianity, as a revolutionary religion by its nature, has been facing a lot of conflicts wherever it has been. Hardship, persecution, suffering, have been the natural things for a Christians. The same has been their plight even in other parts of the world.

In case of North East India also the same has happened. As the tribals of this area had been living in their own tradition for the last many centuries, when this new religion came, a lot of clashes and conflicts occurred. There were serious conflicts regarding rituals and ceremonies, observation of certain days as sacred days, drinking and many kinds of sacrifices. There were divisions in the village and family and there were divisions even among the same tribe, clan etc. There were the conflicts not only between the missionaries and tribals, but also between the British Government and missionaries. Later on, the conflict occurred even in the same Church and denomination,

26. Downs, F.S. (1983) Christianity in North East India p.251.

and this phenomenon has continued till today.

As mentioned above, the first conflict occurred between the missionaries and Government's agents (East India Company). Since the interest of the government was to maintain peace and order in the hills in order to carry out their trade without any disruption they (Britishers) did not want to interfere in tribal culture. Therefore, when the missionaries came, some of the Government officers became afraid that they might disturb the tribal and adversely affect their commercial activities. Thus, the British Government was not in favour of sending any missionary in the midst of the troubles. Some of them strongly protested against the sending of missionaries over there. This attitude of the Company is evident enough in the statement of one of the Board members of the company:

"I am fully convinced that the suffering clergy man, under the name of missionaries or any other name, to overrun India, and penetrate into the interior part of it, would, in first instance, be dangerous and prove utterly destructive of the company's interest, if not wholly annihilate their power in Hindustan."²⁷

Dr. Frazer, a doctor missionary among the Lusheis, was also asked to leave Lusheis hills when he tried to abolish the Boi²⁸ System of the Lusheis.²⁹ This action of Dr. Frazer made the Lushei Chief angry which in turn ultimately affected the British administration. Apart from this, time to time the missionaries were asked to leave when the company felt that their activities would affect the company's business.

Christianity believes in the existence of a personal living God. He is the Sovereign Creator of the heaven and the earth. According to this doctrine, all men are sinners and they carry the wrath of God upon them. Every man has to be judged by God, after his death because he has no way out from Almighty's final judgement. So a man is quite helpless to escape from this terrible judgement. But God, being the merciful God, sent his son, Jesus, to die on the cross for men's sin and by believing in him he can be saved from the inevitable judgement. But the tribals

27. Augustine, John, Rev. "Beginning of Christian work in the Hill of North East India", in Das Gupta Panbala, ed. (1966), A common perspective of North East.

28. Boi is a kind of slavery system the Lushei Chief maintained. Frazer felt that it is against the humanity.

29. Ray, Anemesh, (1978), Op.cit.

believed only in the supernatural spirit. They did not have the concept of sin or judgement. If any crisis or calamity occurred they believed that it was due to God's anger. Therefore, they had to worship him by making sacrifices of animals, birds, rice beer etc.

When Omed Momin and Rumko Momin, the first two Garo converts, preached to their people, the following were their reactions: "What: You are a Garo, Born to a Garo's mother? Do you presume to know the whole Garo tribe and to teach us, your elders? How did you dare to come here? Slighting the demons and trying to deceive us pretending that they have no power to hurt or to kill? They have heard your word and they will have their revenge: Beware some sudden calamity will come upon you. We will follow you indeed! We are not such fools, who cares for your religions. And who will accept it?"³⁰ A number of converts were outcasts from society. (Some were even killed). Open hostilities were directed against the preaching. A local convert evangelist remarked:

"Any preaching, contrary to their religion, was regarded as an encroachment on time honoured custom and as an attack upon their religion. In such cases, when there was

30. Sangma, Melton, "Garo traditional belief and Christianity", in Karemprel, S, ed. Tribe in North East India, (Calcutta : Firm KLM, 1984). p.75.

any sign of willingness to accept the new religion open hostility was aroused against the preaching".³¹

Besides, some converts, who refused to return to their old religion after so much persuasion and threatening, were put to death. The death of a Chang Young man, who was a great warrior, is a glaring example. when he converted into Christianity, this co-villagers thought that they had lost their young warrior. So, they pursued and even threatened him but in vain.³²

The missionaries were also suspected to be the agents of the Company. The tribals called them "whiteman" and looked upon them as a British agent who had come to destroy their tradition. They even tried to kill them at times. The clear evidence was seen when Dr. Clark, a missionary to Ao, was ambushed and attacked with spears while he was on his way to Tamlu³³ village. Even the new converts were looked down upon by the non-christian. They were harassed and ridiculed many times.³⁴ In Lotha Naga area Christian and especially the Church bells were held responsible for their misfortunes.³⁵

31. Luikham, L, A Shorte History of Manipur Baptists Christian Golden Jubilee Ukhrul, 1948. p. 12.

32. Downs, F.S. (1973), op.cit. p.137.

33. Tamlu is another village in Ao areas near the first Naga Mission Headquarter.

34. Barpujan, R.K., "Early Christian Mission in Naga Hills" in Journal of Indian History Vol.48, 1970.

35. Downs, R.S. The Mighty work of God (Gauhati : C.L.C., 1971), p. 136-137.

Tribals had many rituals and ceremonies as an essential part of their life. They held certain days and months as sacred in order to seek blessing from their God and also to appease him for preventing misfortunes. With the coming of new religion, new festivities and ceremonies such as Good Friday, Sunday and Christmanss came into vogue. The convert were instructed to avoid to participate in their old rituals, Hence, amany conflicts and clashes came up between the converts and the non-Christians. The converts refused to participate and even contributed their share in their old taraditional life. BEcause of this , the new converts, who were small in number,were persecuted, Many cases were filed in the Government Courts.

"Among" is an important day for Aos. On this day all the villagers were supposed to stop working and please their God by singing and dancing and gain God's blessing in return. The Christian refused to take part in this. They, therefore, were fined Rs.10/-each³⁶. On the contrary, the Christians were forced to work even on Sunday, which they were not supposed to. Whosoever refused to do so was persecuted and fined.³⁷

36. Tajen Ao, Christianity versus Ao Nagas (Makokchung : Tribal Gospel Mission Publisher Shope, 1975). p.76.

37. Ibid, p.91.

Many of such cases were brought in the Government's court. The decision of the Government was not uniform, Sometimes it was in favour of the Christian and sometimes in the favour of the non-christian. At Impur the Deputy Commissioner decreed that the Nagas were free to follow any form of religion they wished and would not be forced to support any other religion in the wake of the charges levelled by the non-christians against the Christians.³⁹

Conflicts had also occurred regarding the observing of certain superstitious beliefs and taboos. Apotia⁴⁰ was a superstitious taboo among the Aos. According to this, if any one died by chance or accidents namely, falling down from trees, food, etc., it was believed to be brought by an evil spirit on the family. In such cases, the deceased had to be buried immediately on that very spot. The parents and relatives of the deceased had to go through the ritual of self-confinement for six days inside their own house throwing away all their old possessions. Then they were permitted to begin a new life in another locality. But when Christianity came, it stopped such orthodox practices. The bereaved families and relatives were comforted. Instead of abandoning the old house they converted it into a house of

39. Downs, F.S., (1971), The mighty work of God, op.cit. p. 118.

40. Tajen Ao, (1975), op.cit. p.79.

worship. The old traditional villagers thought that this was an interference in their tradition and so they complained against the Christians. Such practices were very frequent even among Jkhasis, Garos, and Luscheis as well.

The missionaries also discouraged the converts to keep away from the activities of non-Christians. Such a teaching indirectly infused the spirit of non-cooperation among the villagers. The Converts began to avoid the activities like "Merit feast" among the Nagas, going to youth dormitory hall, etc. Besides, whenever there was a social function or emergency work in the village of Sunday or Good Friday, the converts did not join saying that it was a taboo for them. Thus, clashes and conflicts between the Christians and non-Christians communities took place.⁴¹

In the beginning, the conflict was mainly between a converted individual and the villagers. The only action they took against him was that they outcast him from their society and removed him from the village's precincts and put them near the Church.⁴² This situation, however, changed later. As the number of converts increased, non-Christian began to feel that if they continued to live together the

41. Ibid, p.139-140.

42. No paper Church buildings were there. It refers to the house where the missionaries lived and have prayer and worship service.

whole village tradition would be destroyed. Thus, the missionaries and converts were asked to leave the old village and live in a separate locality. It was because of this reason that on the 24th october, 1876 Dr.Clark, a pioneering American Baptist missionary among the Naga fled alongwith 15 families from their old village, De Khahaimong, to the new village, Malungmsen.⁴³ In the similar way, many villages were divided into two: the old non-Christian village, and new Christian village. The latter is usually called 'Christian Compound'. Such villages are very common among tribals of North East even today. Regarding this Horam writes: "With the advent of Christianity the village began to split into two: Christian and non-christian community. At times the entire christian community moved out bag and baggage to form a Christian colony".⁴⁴

Regarding this non-cooperation and division of village community Mills also writes:

The spread of christian religioin brought-far different ideal. They inculcated the common of the individual's soul with God and its eternal salvation was

43. Clark, M.M., A corner in India, Philadalphea : 1978, p.20.

44. Horam, M. Social and cultural life of Nagas (Delhi : B.R. Pushlishing Corpn. 1977), p.101.

regarded more important than social and political goals. consequently, Christians were non-cooperative towards the activities of the village community. They were often quite willing to live elsewhere than in their own villages and frequently refused to take part in the Government. Often attempts were made to avoid little acts of social services on the most vital excuses: for instance, there was an old custom by which in every Morung torches were kept which were taken gratis by the travellers. The Christian boys refused to join in collecting the torches on the plea that the Morung was a heathen building.⁴⁵

Conflict between the Christians and the traditional village chiefs who were also responsible for the religious activities in the village. The new converts began to get enlightenment through education. They did not want to remain under the loyalty of the old illiterate traditional leaders. They began to ignore their authorities. At the same time the Church associations and organisations were becoming stronger and more effective. When the whole village was converted into Christianity, church leaders began to hold power over the village panchayat authorities. Such clash of power between the church and political administration led to dispute time to time.

45. Mills, J.S., The Ao Nagas (Bombay : Oxford Press, 1978). p.418.

Though there were no open conflict and dispute, time to time, internal clash between Catholica and Protestant was there. This is evident from Puthenpurakal, Joseph, Baptist mission in Nagaland.

Apart from this at times there were many minor disputes and clashes with in the church itself which led to the formation of various small new denominations.

CHAPTER IV

SECULAR MOVEMENT IN NORTH EAST: SOME SELECTED ASPECTS

Chapter IV

Secular Development In the North East: Some Selected Aspects

Bryan Wilson defined secularization as the process whereby religious thinking, practices and institutions lose their social significance. Wilson viewed the decreasing trend of people's participation in organised religious activities as the clear evidence of secularization of religion. In U.K. during 1880 to 1962 the Sunday worship attendance in Anglican church declined from 30% to 15%. The Easter communion attendance declined from 9% to 6% in the same period. The pattern of religious activities too changed. Sunday became a day of recreation and relaxation.

Furthermore, Wilson observed that another symptom of secularization of religion is the rise of various sectarian and denominational movements in the west. People protested against the set up dogmatic organisational body and tried to form new ones based on proper discipline and rationality. Wilson said that this development of rationalization has gone to a high level among some sectarian religions. In this regard Calvinist and Methodist sects are highly rationalist sects. Later, this rationalization gave birth to development of science as a separate discipline.

Consequently, many scientists and intellectuals were produced in the west outside the church. These intellectuals became the agents of social, economic and political changes. New devices were discovered to continue the social relationships. These new devices which are mechanical in nature replaced the hitherto value based human relationships.

As this process continued religion began to lose its influence on various other social institutions like politics, educations, economy etc. Even within the religious institutions the significance of religious teaching decreased. The time allotted for imparting religious education came to be spent more in talking and chatting. In politics, religious matters no longer remained the main issue of party campaign. The need of socio-economic development became the main concern of politics.

Furthermore, Wilson observed that the influence of the religious priests and clergymen upon its people in west has also become less. With the development of science and technology, people have come to rely more on trained medical doctors and their medicine than the priest or clergy for their sickness. Though the priest and and clergy are necessary during rituals, like death, birth etc., on other occasions their presence is not called for. In this manner

secularization process in religion is taking place continuously.¹

Christian missionaries came to North East to save the tribals from animism through the gospel. In order to achieve their purpose they adopted certain devices, like education; by teaching them to read and write; literary work- like transcribing the tribal dialects into written form, translating the scripture into their own language, printing religious periodicals; charity work through providing cloth- medicine etc. Initially the basic motive of all these activities was to open up their mind and let them accept the new religion.

However, with the process of social, economic and political changes religion could no longer maintain its original form. In course of time it developed secular trends. Religion became a means of asserting tribal socio-political identity. It became an ideology for the tribals to protect themselves from outside forces. Above all religion became a means to enhance the social position/status of the individual, family, clan and tribe. Therefore it would not be incorrect to say that Christianisation is to North-

1. Wilson, R.Bryan, Religion in Secular Society, London, Penguin book pub. 1966), Specially refer to Part I for detail. East tribals as Sanskritization is to Hindus. Hence, A.C.

Sinha writes:

"Conversion to Christianity has consciously moulded their cultural historical distinctiveness. This cultural complex around Christianity has been able to provide a new identity to sizeable population of small states. This tribal Christian state is being used as a political idiom in relation to Indian national politic."²

Christianity became an agent for social integration, political consciousness and economic and social upliftment.

Religion as an Agent of Social Integration

As we have mentioned in Chapter two, North East tribals lived in isolated villages. The clan based village was their basic unit of social and political structure. Each village was like a sovereign independent state with the village chief as its head. Apart from occasional trade with

2. Sinha A.C. "Managing Social consequences of smallness: The Developmental Strategy for the Small Frontier states," in Abbi, B.L. (1984) North East Region: Problem and prospects of development. p.115

the plains there was no social contact with the outside world. Christianity brought together all these fragmented villages into a common platform and established the feeling of oneness. The integration process occurred at two levels: Local and Regional.

As the number of converts increased churches and associations were formed. The first church among the Nagas was established at Dekahaimong village on the 23rd of December in 1872. The first church among the Garos was established in 1867 by Bronson. As the churches increased, associations were formed to bring these churches together and establish the spirit of oneness among them. Thus the first A.O. Baptist Church Association (ABCA) was formed in 1897, followed by Angami Association, 1912, Lotha in 1923, Sema in 1928. In 1937 the Nagaland Baptist Church Council (NBCC) was formed with the aim to bring all these associations under a single administrative body.³ The first association formed in Mizoram was its Presbyteria and Synod in 1910, and 1915.⁴ It brought together all the churches in Mizoram under a single platform. At the regional level larger associations were formed to cover the different churches and associations in the region. Thus the Council of

3. Downs, F.S.(1971) The Mighty work of God, p.227.

4. Ray, Ahnemesh, (1978) Mizoram: dynamic of change. p.61

Baptist Churches North Eastern India (CBCNEI) was formed in 1950, with its Headquarter at Gauhati.⁵ The assembly of Presbyterian Churches of North East India (APCNEI) was formed with its headquarter at Shillong.⁶

In the beginning the associations were formed on tribal basis for the sake of convenience. Unconsciously it gave the tribals the spirit of competition and realisation of their own identity. This process led to coming together of people of the same tribe who lived in different isolated villages into one platform. In a word, this process brought the tribals into unity. For instance Lothas came to realise that they are one sub-tribe.⁷

The introduction of Roman script and putting down of the tribal language into written form also contributed much in the process of integration. Missionaries selected the dialect of a certain large village and put it into written form. Later this dialect became the common one for the whole tribe. For instance, among the Garo, the Awe dialect became common for whole Garos, Cherrapunjee became the common dialect for Khasis, Ukhrul became the common

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5. Downs F.S., (1971) Op.cit., p.244
6. Downs F.S., (1983) 'Christianity in North East', p.241
7. Ibid, Downs: The Might work.....p.248

dialect for Tengkhul Naga tribe.⁸ This introduction of common language reduced the old inter-village feud and rivalry.

Apart from this, with the coming of Christianity and Western education elitism was emerging. They began to have political consciousness. This resulted in various political and tribal movements. For the first time Nagas became conscious of their own identity which was expressed through formation of 'Naga Club'⁹ in 1918 and Naga National Council in 1946.¹⁰ The operation of this political forum cut across all the barriers of tribe and villages. For the first time the feeling of nationalism developed among the Nagas. Such movement also brought about a new unit of political structure. The village or village central political centre shifted to national political centre. The loyalty of the people shifted from traditional village chiefs to these new leaders.

The coming of Christianity also brought about regional integrity. The ecclesiastical bodies like CBCNEI and APCNE played a great role in this regard. CBCNEI covered

8. Downs, F.S., (1983) Christianity in North East p.263.

9. Alemchiba, M.Ao (1970) Op.Cit. p.167.

10. Misrah Dayon: North East India, (Omson Publication Delhi, 1968), p.24.

all the Christians who were under American Baptist mission. It included Nagaland, Meghalaya,¹¹ (Garos) Manipur and Assam. The APCNE covered the churches in Meghalaya, Mizoram. Seminars, conferences and conventions were held under these platforms at regular intervals. This brought cultural, and emotional integration. Besides this Christianity also brought linguistic, political and religious integration to the region. Thus, D.R. Mankaker said Christianity brought to tribals their cultural and religious integration which in turn facilitated their National integration.¹²

Inculcation of new social values and norms

Christianity brought radical changes in the social occupational and rational dimensions in tribal society leading to the substantial changes in their outlook in whole of the region. It has implanted new values and norms in the people's mind through the teaching of new religious ethos based on the Bible.

Missionaries, in their zeal to take out the tribals from their heathen life, used many devices to fulfill their mission; they provided education, medicine,

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11. From Meghalaya only Garos are affiliated to CBCNEI for they were pioneered by American Baptist mission.
 12. Mankaker D.R. "Understanding of Tribals on our North Eastern Boarder", Singh ed. (1976) The Tribal situation in India, p.111.

and basic amenities to meet their immediate needs. On the other hand many traditional practices and norms like, head hunting, raiding, dormitory halls, drinking of rice beer, feasting and even traditional wood curving were demolished. All these were on the simple plea that such activities were mere glorification of their heathen god. In due course these were replaced by many social ethical norms and values.

The revered scriptural teaching that murder is a serious crime easily persuaded them to give up their traditional head hanging practice. The beastly and wild spirit of blood shedding got transformed into the humanitarian spirit of love and benevolence so much so that even their worst enemies at once became their beloved ones. In this way real human values enshrined in the scriptures were disseminated all over the land. Christian Mission, thus, gave a new value system which encouraged people to accept even strangers as their own brothers and sisters. The Christian concepts like individual freedom and liberty heavily influenced the tribals' thinking and conceptualisation. The abolition of the feast, like 'Forest of Merit' among the Nagas further enlivened this spirit. This traditional practice was also abolished on the reason that it consumed a lot of wealth and time for nothing; the wasting of both time and wealth was held as a crime in the Bible. On the other hand, people were encouraged to work

hard and share their income with others. Moreover, the Missionaries taught that everyone should work regardless of his or her economic status. In this way the new ethics of individualism and hard working were deeply planted into people's mind. Regarding this M. Aram remarked.

With the impact of modern life and culture, there is a strong trend for the Naga people to become more and more individualistic. The average Naga is more concern about his individual advancement and welfare. Formerly, the Naga village were well-knited units with strong social cohesion. Today there is loosening of the community structure and individual is more and more on his own.¹³

The Christian Mission rejuvenated the age old concept of the institution of marriage, too. Polygamy as well as divorce, which were the normal practice among the then tribals, were held to be a sin. They held that the

13. Aram, M, The emergence situation in Nagaland and some suggestion for a 'National Policy' in Singh ed. (1986). The tribal situation in India.

(The purpose of marriage was to glorify God rather than to gratify their carnal pleasures. The spirit of unison between a wife and husband after the nuptials was deeply planted in the couple's mind. This subsequently strengthen the fragile family life. Christianity also taught the equality of human beings, especially the two distinct sexes. This enhanced the status of Mizos women in the society.¹⁴ The contrary occurred among the Khasis and the Garos. In this case the status of the women was brought on par with men.¹⁵ Christianity thus, brought radical changes even in the attitude of the two opposite sexes.

The maintenance of records and accountings in the church organisations and associations which were in vogue also gave rise to the spirit of counting and calculation. The proper functioning and control of any organisation witnessed revolutionary changes.

The liberation of the tribals from the slavery of superstition resulted into great changes in their world view. The natural objects like, trees, mountains, rivers, stones, and animals which were once worshipped as God lost their sanctity to the extent that they immediately resorted

14. Rai, Anemesh; (1978) Mizoram; dynamic of change. p.62.

15. Nataranjan, N, (1977) Missionary among the Khasis p.315

to the economic exploitation of all these natural resources. Many a big trees were felled down in the forests, transforming it into vast chunk of cultivable land. A vast bulk of timber was used for many commercial needs such as construction of houses and furniture etc.

The introduction of Western education and new occupational structures also brought new value systems. The one time highly appreciated jobs like hunting, fishing, farming etc. lost their values. On the other hand people began to appreciate those who used pen and worked in the offices and schools. Consequently, the parents started sending their children to the schools instead of sending them to jungle and fields. Those who were educated held high posts in the government offices, began to enjoy a considerably high social status. The Christian and Western impact did not spare even the norms and values pertaining to their robes. The tribals started discarding their old traditional dresses and adopted the western one. Trousers, shirt, and necktie became their normal dress. Besides, the people also adopted the western culture of eating and drinking such as snack, coffee, tea etc.¹⁶

The missionaries also imposed strict discipline on cheating stealing, frauding, deceiving etc. This greatly

16. Mills, J.S. (1973) The Ao Nagas, p.419

augmented their moral life. Though they could not stick to all the teachings, they tried their best to reach the mark. The Christian Missionaries also taught manners of highly disciplined life, for example, politeness, kindness, humbleness, honesty etc. Those who kept up such a life were highly esteemed in the society. Drinking, which has been considered as a source of strength and enjoyment of the people, was totally prohibited. Those who continued to drink were excommunicated from the public life. The old traditional music and dance were also completely replaced by the Christian hymns and music. The young generation, who grew up in such an environment, was completely moulded by this new social ethical norms.

Finally, the Christian Missionaries also taught the value of cleanliness. They taught that Christian should maintain perfect spiritual, mental and physical cleanliness. In this way, the value of cleanliness was imparted deep in their mind. The new believers tried their best to maintain perfect tidiness. Consequently, the Christians began to clean and clear up their houses and residential premises.¹⁷ Thus, the present value system and norms of the tribals are completely based on the Christian ethics and western culture in the North East region of the country.

17. Ibid. p.421,

Modernization of Education and Occupation

Missionaries gave much importance to educational work in the beginning. This was because they wanted people to be able to read the Bible and accept it. That is why wherever they went they established school first. Dr. Bronson who reached Naga village in A.O. area opened the school for the first time in Naga village. Lorrain and Mr. I.W. Savidge devoted much of their time in educational work in Lushei hills. The first Mission work among Garo and Khasis was started by opening educational institutions in Cherrapunji.

The initial purpose was to enable the tribals to read the written scripture. But as time went on the purpose was diversified. Extra vocational pursuits were introduced as a part of the school curriculum. Agriculture, carpentry, industry, music, etc. became a part of the school curriculum.¹⁸ Separate schools were established for the girls. The purpose was to remove the prejudiced attitude of the people toward women as inferior beings. Vocational activities such as preparation of cotton seed, needle works including simple cutting; basket work in bamboos and cane; baby welfare; simple pottery using local clay; body care

18. Downs, F.S, (1971) The Mighty Work of God. p.

like first aid and nursing including crockery, knitting and crochet work seedling, gardening, milking of cow, goat, and making of cream and butter from milk etc., were introduced in the school. The purpose of these was to make the students independent and self reliant in every possible way.¹⁹ Consequently, after finishing the course students began to take up different professions. In the beginning most of them were engaged in preaching, teaching or clerical job, employed by the church.²⁰ But later, when the institutions were multiplied and educated people increased, people entered into various professions like state civil services, politics, even contract work and business.²¹ People began to have a more positive attitude towards women. They (women) also started working in educational institutions, government offices, and hospitals, as teachers, secretaries, typists and nurses. Thus, with modernization of education a new attitude towards women and occupational structure were brought about in tribal society.

19. Dena. L, (1986) Christian Mission and Colonialism. p.109

20. Mathur PRG,, The Khasis of Meghalaya (New Dehli ; Como Publication 1979). p.57

21. Gassah, L.S, ed Garro Hills, Land and the People (Gauhati: Omson Publication) 1984. p.75

Political Awakening

One of the significant outcome of christian mission in North East India is the development of political-consciousness among the tribals. The coming of Christianity and Western education brought the emerging elites of the tribals into contact with the liberal ideas of the West. This was indirectly responsible for the rise of various tribal and national movements in the region.²²

Lal Dena in his book "Christian mission and Colonialism" writes :

"It cannot be denied that Christianity and Western education brought the liberal ideas of the West and in the process helped directly or indirectly the growth of political movement in North East'.²³

The first political movement appeared among the Khasis in 1900 when the Khasi Jaintia Darbar was established.²⁴ The purpose was to preserve and protect their culture and tradition. Not much information is available regarding this movement. After a gap of one to two

22. Quarishi, F.A, Chrishtianity in the North Estern Hills of Asia (Dhaka: University Press 1987). p.30

23. Dena. L, (1986) op.cit p.122

24. Chaube, S. Politics in North-East India. (Delhi: Orient Long man, 1973). p 63.

under the leadership of Reverend James Joy Mohon Nichol Roy.²⁵ The purpose was the same with the previous Khasi Jaintia Darbar of 1900. Here we can assume that it was the revival of the previous movement. Nearly ten years later, in 1932 another federation was formed, called 'Khasi state Federation'. The representative of this federation submitted a memorandum to Viceroy Willington, the then Commissioner-in-Charge of Khasi Jaintia District. The memorandum demanded representation of Khasis state in Assam Legislative Assembly. Later on the curtailment of the power of the Deputy Commissioner was demanded.

By 1946, the Khasi Jaintia political Association was formed. The aim of this Association was to demand sovereign State from Indian Union. In the same year, the representative of the association submitted a memorandum to the Secretary of State. The memorandum stated that Khasi belong to entirely different race. They have been living in democratic common society having their own culture and tradition since time immemorial.²⁶ The demand was rejected by the Government saying that it was not acceptable.

After World War II Garos also began to assert their political rights. Under the initiation of the Garo

25. He is one of the first Christian Leaders among the Khasis

26. Ibid, p.67-68.

churches, they submitted a draft to the Bordo-loi Sub-Committee to Gauhati under the banner of Garo National Conference. The demand was that all the power of the Government including taxation and administration of justice should be transferred to local councils. The link between the government and local councils should be only in matter of defence external and communication.²⁷ The Indian Government, however, did not accept their demand. Meghalaya remained as a partially excluded District under Assam till 1970.

The political awakening among the Nagas began in the beginning of 20th century. The formation of Naga Club in Makokchung and Kohima was the first expression of people's political consciousness. Initially, the purpose of the Club was to preserve their culture and tradition and take care of the people's need. However, the purpose was changed later. In 1929, when the Statutory Commission of India led by John Simon, Clement Atlee and E.Cadogan, visited Kohima, on the 10th of January, the representatives of the Club submitted a memorandum. In the memorandum they expressed the desire of the Nagas to live independently after the British would leave India.²⁸ Following this, many small Clubs and

27. Ibid p.72

28. Alemchij M, Ao (1970) A brief Historical Account of Nagaland.p 162-63

associations were formed to preserve and protect their own culture and traditions.

In 1945, with the aim of uniting the Nagas C.R. Pawsei, the then Deputy Commissioner of Naga Hills, established 'Naga Hills District Tribals Council'. The name was changed into Naga National Council, in February, 1946. From there on this (NNC) became a political organisation for meeting the political aspiration of the Nagas.²⁹ For the first time Nagas began to assert their nationality from that time on.

The leadership of the organisation (N.N.C.) was taken over by another young educated man (Z.Phizo). He was an enlightened, smart and active man and under his leadership Naga National movement became more radical and intensified. On the 14th of August, the Nagas declared independence, and under the NNC Federal Government was formed. This declaration of the Naga independence was the expression of the Nagas' desire to be separated from the Indian Union.³⁰ The talks on this subject have been going on since that time. Meanwhile, Nagaland continued to remain as a Naga Hill District under Assam till 1963.

29. Ibid p.165

30. Nuh, V.K Rev. Nagaland Church and Politics. (Kohima: V. Nuh and Brother pub. 1986). p.169.

The sign of political awakening in Lushei hills began in 1925. A group of educated youth formed an association under the leadership of Telera Rathe. The purpose of the organisation was to press the government to abolish the traditional administrative system of chieftainship and join Assam politics. This movement was the expression of enlightenment of young people by the Western liberal ideas. They wanted to be free from the autocratic rule of their chiefs. This clearly shows the political consciousness developing among the educated enlightened youngsters.

In 1935, a young Lushei Association was formed to take care of the need of the young people regarding etiquette manner, cleanliness. The same association was changed into 'Mizo Common People's Union'. In the same year this was changed into a Mizo Union. With its name the purpose of the association was changed. From a mere social organisation it became a political platform. The demand for the abolition of chieftainship was intensified.³¹

Before Indian independence there were not much political movement among the Mizos. The major demand of the educated elites was just to be free from the autocratic rule

31. Van, Hlun, John (1975) Church and Political upheaveal in Mizoram p.101.

of the traditional chief and participate in modern politics. The real political movement for more power and separation from Indian Union, began only after independence. It started in 1964 when Mizo National Front was formed under the leadership of Laldenga. Initially, the organisation was called 'Mizo National Famine Front' with the aim to take care of the needs of people, who were stricken by famine. Later it became a separatist political movement. In 1965 MNF declared their own government called Mizoram Sarkar (means Mozoram Government). The MNF continued to struggle for an independent state. On the other hand, Mizoram was put under Assam state as excluded Lushai hill district till 1971.³²

The coming of Christian mission was like opening of the 'Pandorox box' for North East tribals. They became more enlightened as they came into contact with the outside world. Ultimately they began to realise their own identity. This resulted in various political movements.

Post Independent Development

Geographically, culturally and economically North East tribals are isolated from the rest of the country. To remove this gap government has taken up various political and economic measures.

32. Ibid. p.128

The introduction of Autonomous District Council for the hilly district of Assam under the sixth schedule of 1953, in Indian Constitution, brought many changes in the administrative system. For the first time power of chieftain was removed specially in Lushei hills and Khasi Jaintia hills. The administrative power was transferred to the elected Council members. The chief was put under the direct supervision of the Council. Under the provision of the Para 3(1) (g) of the six schedule the elected councillors obtained the power to regulate the appointment and succession of the chief-specially in Garo and Lushei Hills districts.

In United Khasi Jaintia hills, the Autonomous District Act of 1954 empowered the Council to appoint and remove the chief. The council is also given the authority to suspend the chief in case the incumbent violated the term and condition of his appointment. Further, in Khasi Jaintia hill district, 'the Act of appointment and succession of cheif and headman, 1980,' debared the chief and headman from taking part in politics. Armed with such various political acts, the District Council have, therefore, put under its complete control othe traditional authority.³³

33. Gassah, L,S, (1984) ed. op cit p. 15

This new system brought basic changes in the administrative structure in the North East tribal society. This also brought uniformity of administrative system. The autocratic rule of the Konyak chief, 'Ang' Lushei chief, 'La' were brought down to democratic rule. This changes in basic structure also led to change in the leadership. Young educated elites began involving themselves in politics and have taken over the leadership from the old traditional chief.

The granting of political autonomous state to the Hill Districts of Assam is the second phase of political development. In 1957, the Naga People's Convention was formed under the leadership of Dr. Imkongleba Ao and J.B. Jashokie Angami. The purpose of this convention was to act as a reconciliatory body between underground political movement and Indian Government. In the third meeting of the N.P.C., the decision was taken to send a delegate of 15 members to meet the Prime Minister and demand for statehood under certain conditions. Finally, the delegates met Jawaharlal Nehru, (the then Prime Minister of India) at the same time in charge of Foreign Affairs, and presented their demand. The demand was gladly accepted by the government. Under the Thirteen Amendment Act of 1962, enacted by the Parliament Nagaland was granted a statehood under Indian

Union.³⁴ Eventually Nagaland was inaugurated as a fulfilled state under India Union by Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, the then President of India, on 1st December, 1963.³⁵ From that time of Nagaland began to have state legislative assembly consisting of 60 elected members by the people on the basis of adult franchise.

Under the Act of Assam states reorganisation, 1970, Meghalaya and Mizoram were also declared to be autonomous states under the Indian Union. Meghalaya came to have a legislative Assembly consisting of 60 elected members like that of Nagaland. Mizoram also began to have its legislative Assembly with a Lt. Governor. In 1986, under the 54th Amendment Act of the Constitution Mizoram was conferred a full statehood.³⁶ With this the long insurgency movement of 'Mizo National Front' under Laldenga's leadership came to an end.

The setting up of North East Council (NEC) under the Parliament Act of 'North Eastern Act 1971, is a major step the government has taken up for the economic development of North Eastern tribal states. It was

34. Alemchiba M, Ao (1970) op.cit, p. 168

35. Ibid p.170.

36. Manorama Year Book, 1989. p.471.

inaugurated by late Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. The object of the Council is to formulate a unified and coordinate marginal plan for securing the balance of development in the region under the five year plan. Separate funds are provided for the execution of the regional plan as provided by NEC and approved by the Planning Commission.³⁷ This policy of the government is meant to bring uniformity of economic disparity in the region.

Though the traditional agricultural practice of Jhuming is (some call it slash and burn) still dominant, there is now a gradually shifting to terrace cultivation. This change in basic infrastructure of the economy leads to corresponding changes in occupational pattern and use of land, labour, water resources etc. These changes inevitably resulted in the need for producing surplus either in cash or kind in order to obtain consumer goods and necessities from the market.³⁸

Modernization of agriculture has been taking place since the inception of N.E.C. Government introduced new

37. Ganguly J.B., 'Economic Development and social tension: in North East India' in Abbi, B.L, (1984) ed. North Eastern region problem and prospect of economic development, p.102.

38. Ibid, p.105-106.

39. Salow, Swabera, Islam, 'Nagaland's economy in transition, since 1964 - (Delhi: Omson Publication, 1989). p.125.

technologies on systematic basis to increase food production. Introduction of scientific management of soil and water in the area on watershed basis and conservation of forest are new technologies. The demand for plant production equipment and higher consumption of fertilizers, pesticides, chemicals etc. are a sign of impact of modernization of agriculture. Along with this the programme of animal husbandry, and Dairy Development, Fisheries, Forest Rural development cooperation etc. are fast developing.³⁹

The emergence of land and labour as exchange commodities is another sign of change in tribal economy. Previously there was no idea of sale of land and labour. Land was collectively owned by the Community and labour was free. This commercialization of land and labour further led to ownership of land by individuals, redistribution of land through sale and purchase and the use of land for productive purposes. This development combined with the spread of education and opportunities for joining profession and administrative services, etc. has facilitated the growth of propertied middle class in the society. As the government is pouring more and more money in the name of rural development the middle propertied class is becoming richer. This has brought about a distinct division of population into two

40. Goswami, M.G. (1996) op.cit.p 42

three classes. Tribal society is no longer a homogenous society, but stratified into two/three classes. Since the interest among these class are not the same, clashes of interest is bound to occur.⁴⁰

As the market economy develops, the rural economy is gradually linking up with the urban and national economy. The hitherto economy which was limited to the foot hills are now extended to big cities like Calcutta, Dakka etc.⁴¹ As the gradual process of industrialization and monetary economic increases, changes in social relationship are also taking place. Human value based social relationship is replaced by artificial mechanical relationship. The hitherto family clan and village centered social life is being replaced by socio-economic based relationships.

41. Salow, Swabera, Islam, (1989) op.cit. p.130.

CHAPTER - V

CONCLUSIONS

CONCLUSIONS

This paper, in a way, has attempted to understand the movements and rise of Protestant Christian in Europe as well in Asia. Special emphasis however, is on its role on North-Eastern Tribal belts of Indian sub-continent.

Protestantism, though one of the youngest sects of Christian religion, has spread almost all over the world in a very short span so much so that some of the European countries, such as Switzerland, Netherland and Sweden have even adopted it as their national religion. Later on, it encompassed Asian horizon in the late 17th century. Its role and movement in three Asian Countries, South Korea, Japan and India have been briefly discussed in the preceding chapters.

It is seen that people's response to this new religion has been different from country to country depending on their social, political, economic and cultural backgrounds and conditions in this continent. South Korea, whose backgrounds and conditions were quite suitable for this new religion, was proved to be the most successful land for Protestant Movement. Within a short span of time the percentage of Protestant Christian reached a high watermark. Further, this new religion has been able to penetrated every strata of the society in that country.

With regard to Japan and India, the nature of movement is found to be slightly different. In case of the former, the religion was mainly urban oriented. This was due to the fact that in urban areas the traditional cultural ties were a bit loose. Contrary to it, in rural areas the traditional ties were so strong that Christianity could not make a dent over there. The youngsters who came to the town and cities for education were fascinated by the Modern Western culture which came along with Christianity. So in due course they accepted this new religion. In Japan we also see another sort of conversion to which Missionaries often term "Mass conversion". This occurred mainly among the 'Samurai Clan' which was in the lowest strata of the Japanese society. They accepted Christianity in order to enhance their social position. This type of movement were similar to that of India.

Whatever be the nature of the movement, one of the most important impacts of Protestant Christian in these two countries is, most probably, the introduction of modern technologies and consequent development of both the nations. Undoubtedly, all these had transformed their agrarian economy to highly industrial one.

Protestant Christian came to India during the late 17th century. However its movements were not that

successful. Most of the converts were from among the lower section of the society mainly SCHEDULED CASTE and SCHEDULED TRIBES. The former got converted into Christianity in order to free themselves from the Hindu caste domination and also to boost up their social position. The latter, on the other hand, accepted Christianity because they found a deeper and easily understandable philosophy of happier life in this new religion. Though the converts were mainly from these two social groups its impact in the country is seen on a wider social matrix. Beginning from an individual convert it is seen to have affected the social, political, economy, cultural and even the religious structures of the country. Those who accepted this new religion are seen to have a life styles which are obviously distinct from others. Not only that even their thinking, ideas, and feelings are also found to be different from other non-converts. This has laid the foundation of an entirely new community based on Christian ethics inside the country. The christian concepts of individual freedom, liberty and fraternity influenced the mind of Indian intelligentsia which contributed much to the Indian National Movement. Further, the christian ethics of charity also exerted much influence on the social workers. As a result, many movements for the upliftments of downtroddens were launched, during 19th century. Besides, the National religion, Hinduism, discarded many of its evil

practices, such as Sati, Child infanticide and Dowry etc.

Protestant Christian came to North East India under the three Missions : London Baptist Mission, Welsh Presbyterian Mission, and American Baptist Mission. Regardless of their mutual differences, they worked in unitedly and spiritedly to pull out the Tribals from their heathern life through the christian religion. In their sincere effort to a chief their purpose they did not spare even a single aspect of Tribal life untouch. Beginning from prohibiting of individuals habit like drinking, eating etc. it demolished all other traditional social practices such as Head-hunting, Raiding, Youth Dormitory hall, Feast of Merit etc. In place of these Christian activities like, Christmas celebration, Good Friday, Educational Institutions church, Occasional gatherings like, Conferences, Seminars, Camping etc., were introduced. This brought about a lot of changes to the individual as well as social life of the tribals.

The Christian mission which came along with modern education, also brought changes in their existing occupations. Many young educated people began to take up different profession, like secretarial, clerical, medicine, business, contractor, etc., Not only that, the Christian mission even played an important role in imparting political

and geographical integrity to the region. Furthermore, the formation of association, conventions, the time to time seminars, conferences, and other annual gatherings gave them social and emotional integrity too. The introduction of a script to their tribal language further argued their feeling of solidarity with all the people in the region. Above all, christianity brought about the isolated villages of the region into one religion. Thus the traditional social relationship of enmity was ultimately replaced by Christian love.

The Christian mission played a massive role in bringing about new political and economic structures in the region. The old uneducated village chiefs were replaced by the educated intelligent and young one. The modern democratic polity was introduced in the village administration leading to the breaking down of the traditional one. Besides, young people began to realise their own political and social identity which eventually led to various political movements demanding autonomous and sovereign tribal independent nation. On the economic aspects, with the changing of occupational structures, various social classes began to appear in the society. The gap between the rich and the poor became wider. This was bound to produce social tensions in the society. The clash of economic, political and social interest between these

classes become so obvious. Thus, as in other part of the world, Christianity has brought about a new social, political and economic ways of life for the North East Tribals.

The question, whether this religion has had negative or positive role on the North East tribals, is still a moot point. Different writers hold different views while some opine that the Christianity has destroyed the rich, beautiful and harmonious cultural heritages of the tribals, the others hold a contrary view. Most of the proponents of the first school are social anthropologists, for example Verrier Elwin, Furer Haimendorf, and J.S.Mill¹ etc. J.S.Mill, who is the mouthpiece of the school, maintains :

"The supression among the baptists of the ancient feast in which all join, is not only a lost to the would be host, but to the village as whole, and net least to the poor, who always get their share of good cheers at such festivals. To abolish this feast is to do away with every occasion on which the awful monotony of the village life is broken".

1. For more detail their original booms can be referred such as, The philosophy of NEFA; The Naked Nagas, The AO Nagas etc.

D.R. Mankekar, K.S. Singh² and others are the modern writers who belong to this school but hold that Christianity brought the spirit of separatism in this region. K.S.Singh in his book The Tribal Movement in India writes that Christianity gives a strong sense of identity to the tribals which has led to the political movements ranging from autonomy to independence, and constitutional agitations to arms insurgency. D.R. mankekar writes:

'The Christian religion preached by the hot gospelling Western Missionaries was inevitably based against all indigeneous religions, not only animism but also against Hinduism, Budhism, and Muslim. Western education and other civilising processes led to the spiritual and cultural isolations of the Nagas from the mainstream of Indian life.'

Prof. R.K. Barpujary³ is one of the important figures in the latter school which strongly holds an opposite viewpoint. According to him Christianity has given a defensive weapon to the tribals from the destruction of

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2. Their books, On the slippery slope in Nagaland, The Tribal Movement in India. Etc., Can be referred for detail
 3. For more detail information, refer his book 'The American Missionaries in North East India'.

outside forces especially from Hindu Castism. Moreover Christianity brought out the one time barbarous wild tribals to the modern civilization.

If one looks at the issues objectively he cannot but observe that Christian religion has played some positive role in the revival and rejuvenation of North East tribal society. However, the question: if there were no Christianity what would have been the conditions of the North East tribals society today? has many answers. One of them is, in the absence of Christian Mission, the North East tribals would have remained rooted in their primitivism. At least in no way the pace of developments would have been as good as today. Under the circumstances it seems rather prejudiced and parochial to hold Christian Missions directly responsible for separatistic movements. This, in fact, is the outcome of the modern secular education which is a world wide phenomena at the present time.

In no way Christianity be held solely responsible for such separatist movements sweeping the region in the present times because it was brought over here by the Christian Missionaries to enlighten the then tribal people who were in darkness. To assert that this missionaries had in mind to raise them for the present separatist movements sounds illogical.

In the present time the youth of the region have begun to realise the necessity of keeping their identity by preserving their age old traditional cultures. Many such movements are going on in the different parts of the same region, for example the 'Cultural revivalism' among the Sen Khasis in Meghalaya.⁴

More opportunities should be opened up to study in depth the tribal culture and their newly come up religion in order to ascertain its role in the recent times. The cultural practices which are even today constructive for their welfare and development should be preserved. In addition, more opportunities should be made available to the tribals to have closer contacts with the Christians of the other parts of the country so much so that the feelings of isolation and separatism may take to wings. In a way, this would help to promote the true spirit of christianity: Freedom, Liberty, and Fraternity, which would ultimately help to the process of National integration.

4. Nataranjan N. "Cultural Revivalism among the Khasis" in Singh ed. (1986), The Tribal Movements in India. Cit.Op.

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Appendix-I

The introduction of new holy days gave non-cooperation spirit and division in the village community. In the case of any public emergency work on Sunday, the Christians did not participate on the ground that it was their holyday. Regarding this Mill^o observed that in an Ao viillage, where Christian were in majority a fine was imposed on the non-christian who went to see their trap on Sunday. But if some wild beasts were spoiling the crop of their field only non-christian were sent to save the crop from destruction. Christians remained at home on the pretext that the day was a Sabbath. Mill quoted the remark of professor William G. Smith: "Familiarity with the missionary attitudes and practices, which were too characteristics, makes inevitably the conclusion that there is entirely too much negation, too much taboos and too little that is positive. There is grave danger that christianity as presented to the people come to a little more than adoption of another set of taboos and taboo is not a new element in the light of any group in a low cultural level. Under the old system Nagas have to refrain from working on the field on certain day ~~last~~ there God, Lizaba cause the village with an epidemic or blight the rice crop, now they must refrain from work on the christian sabbath last jehovah, the god of Israel Smith them for their wickedness.

Appendix-II

There are not much evidence of conflict among the denominations regarding their doctrine and work. Time to time though, did not come together in one platform, a mutual adjustment was made and mission work was carried on in different field. But the conflict within the Church came when a wave of revival spirit came in Mizoram during 1910-1913. This group ~~the~~ danced, sang and prophesied, ~~even~~ whole night and day in the church. The educated theologian who were the custodian of th church began to denounce their activities. As a result a new denomination was formed within the same church. Conflict and dispute in the church also took place but within the churches on the ground of certain disciplinary action taken by the church. Such dispute also led to the formation of new church or denomination. The first Catholic Church in Lotha Naga area was formed by four young men in this manner. It was said that in 1951, seven young men were expelled from the church as disciplinary action for their misbehaviour. They were demanded to apologize in order to restore back to the church. Three of them accepted the demand and returned but four of them left the church. They contacted the Catholic Church there.