

The History Of Education And The Literary Development Of The Bodo In The Brahmaputra Valley

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Abstract

The education is regarded as the invincible element for the development of a society. Without the progress of education the rate of development index of a particular society cannot be measured. The Bodos are the single largest aboriginal tribe living in the Brahmaputra valley of Assam from the time immemorial. They possessed rich socio-cultural tradition and solid language of their own. In the early 19th century on the eve of British intervention in Assam the condition of education among the Bodos was completely in a stake. It was after the adoption of the education policy in Assam by British Government the ray of educational hope reached to the Bodos. It was undeniable fact that the Christian Missionaries also played an important role in disseminating western education among the Bodos through their evangelical objectives in view. They established many schools in the remote places of the Bodo populated areas to spread the education. Besides that the Christian Missionaries left many literary activities among the Bodos as a credit in their account. These missionary activities awaken the educated elite sections of the Bodos to promulgate social reform movement by the means of literary activities. As a consequence in the early part of the 20th century under the banner of Boro Chatra Sanmilani some of the educated Bodo youths had started to publish series of magazines like Bibar, Jenthoka and Alongbar etc. and many others. This process of literary development among the Bodos stimulated the trend of social awakening and paved encouragement to the new generation towards the path of enlightenment.

Keywords: Education, British, Christian Missionary, Bodo, Literature.

Introduction:

The Bodos constituted a single largest plains tribe of Assam living in the Brahmaputra valley from the ancient time. Sir Edward Gait describes the Bodos 'as aborigines or the earliest known inhabitant of the Brahmaputra valley'¹. In different places they are identical with different names. In the Brahmaputra valley they call themselves Bodo or Bodo fisa (son of the Bodo) and in Goalpara and North Bengal they are identified as Mech. In north Kachar hills they are known as Dimasa, derived from Dima-fisa or the son of the river. They are also known as Timisa by the Ahoms². According to K.L. Baruah, the Bodo speaking people have been settled in the plains of Assam since the long period of time and also identified as the Kiratas and Mlechhas spoken people in Mahabharata³. Observing the widespread and extension of Bodo language they seemed first to settled in the whole of Brahmaputra valley and as far as to the North Bengal⁴. As per the 2011 census the Bodo speaking people stood at 14, 16,125 in Assam. The highest concentration of Bodo speaking population is found in the four districts of BTAD (Bodoland Territorial Area Districts), Assam, which comprises of Kokrajhar, Chirang, Baksa and Udalguri.⁵

Prior to the introduction of the British rule in Assam there was no formal education among the Bodos. In the beginning the British colonial government did not have any agenda for the expansion of education among the Bodos. The schools that were established in some districts of Assam were located at far distance from the Bodo inhabited villages.⁶

Following the introduction of western education the press became a foreseeable byproduct of the British rule in India⁷. The introduction of press in Assam paved the way for renaissance and enlightenment among the people. In the 19th century Assamese literature got an impetus of the rapid changes. The trend and mood of Assamese literature shifted from God to man and it was directly influenced by the English Romantic poetry of the 19th century⁸. In Assam the first printing press was established at Sibsagar in 1844. Likely the Baptist missionaries published the *Orunodoi*, the first Assamese monthly magazine in 1846. The magazine played an important role in spreading ideas and knowledge among the youths⁹.

Before the introduction of *Charter Act of 1813* the education policy the British East India Company was one of indifference.¹⁰ Earlier they felt that missionary activities would perturb the traditional beliefs of the indigenous people and this could endanger in the region¹¹. However, the Charter made the education company's responsibility to encourage and impart knowledge of science and literature among the inhabitants of British Indian territory¹². To mark Assam as the heart of education P.C. Choudhury cited that in the 7th C A.D. under the educational patronage of Bhaskar Varman, *Kamrupa*¹³ became the centre of learning and many outside students were attracted to come to Kamrupa.¹⁴ In imparting education the *Varnasrama dharma*¹⁵ played an important role in Ancient Assam. In the 16th and 17th century the growth of Vaisnavism disciples in Assam undertook writing of chronicle history of medieval Assam.¹⁶

Educational Policy of British in Assam:

Due to the political chaos and instability the scenario of education in Assam was deteriorated in the early intervention of the British rule¹⁷. For an instance in 1826 David Scott was appointed as an Agent to the Governor General for looking after the whole of North-Eastern Frontier of Bengal and the charge of civil commissioner of North East Rangpore (Goalpara and Garo Hills) and the judge of the court of Sylhet¹⁸. Soon after taking the charge, to improve and promote the indigenous educational system Scott had obtained a sanction from Government of Bengal to establish number of schools in Upper and lower Assam.¹⁹ In 1826 on the prior approval from the Government of India, Scott instructed to establish eleven schools in *gurukul*

style in different parts of Assam like Guwahati, Nilachal, Naduar, Pati- Darrang, Hajo, Bajali, Sheela, Biswanath, Nagaon and Mangaldai.²⁰ Due to the inadequate local teachers to impart education in the schools, Bengali was made medium of instruction and official language by the British for their convenience of communication in the court.²¹

Francis Jenkins, the Commissioner of Assam (1834-61) decided to incorporate the former official aristocracy in the government service to gain their confidence. It was also urged that the number of youths to be sent to Calcutta for necessary training so that the teachers would be capable of teaching both English and Bengali. On that policy of Jenkin the local people were massively encouraged to accept English education.²²

The Wood's Despatch of 1854 laid the foundation of modern system of education in India.²³ Accordingly in pursuance of the recommendations of the Wood's Despatch three schools were opened in the Bodo and Miri populated areas of Darrang district under the supervision of C.H. Hesselmeyer from the Anglican Mission.²⁴

Educational awareness among the Bodos:

The process of formal education among the Bodos started in 1835, when Francis Jenkins, the then Commissioner of Assam initiated the process of imparting education among the Bodos by functioning three public schools in the Darrang district. From 1854, the Provincial Government adopted a specific educational policy in relation to the Bodo people of Darrang district through the Christian Missionary. The initiative brought the Bodos into the limelight for the first time. But no such initiatives were adopted in the districts of Goalpara and Kamrup.²⁵ In 1847-1848, there was only one secondary and nine primary schools in Goalpara district. In 1853, during the visit of A. J. Moffatt Mills there were only 10 schools in the Goalpara district of all grades.²⁶

In 1872 Sir George Campbell introduced a scheme for educational reform by extending grant-in-aid rules to large number of unaided schools of villages. By 31st March 1873, under this scheme a number of 82 schools with enrollment of 1,882 students received government aid in the Goalpara district.²⁷ In 1872-73, 65 more government aided primary schools including two girls' *pathsalas* (schools) were established in the district. A total number of 1,321 boys' students enrolled, out of it 212 Muhammadans and 151 were among Garos, Rabhas and a few number of Bodo students got enrolled.²⁸ It was to be noted that the Bodo pupils started to enroll in that schools with the increase number of schools in the district.²⁹ In Goalpara district there were only 80 primary schools with 1840 students in 1874-75,³⁰ and by the 31st March 1876 the number of schools in the district increased to 129 with enrolment of 2295 students.³¹ Later it rose to 230 schools with 5827 students in 1901.³² There were four high schools in the Goalpara district which were located at Dhubri, Goalpara, Abhayapuri, and Gauripur. There were Middle English schools at Bilasipara, Bagribari, Manikarchar and Dalgoma in the district. Besides that vernacular schools were located at Sukchar, Patamari, Chhatrasal, South Salmara, Bijni, Atugaon, Putimari, Amguri, Goalpara and Dhubri.³³ In 1903-04 the lower and upper primary schools in the district were 192 and 16 numbers respectively.³⁴ In these schools a few number of Bodo students from north bank of the Brahmaputra got enrolled to pursue education.³⁵

Among the early evangelical activities among the Bodos, the American Baptist Missionaries were the first to come into contact with them. In December 1841, Oliver T. Cutter during his visit at Tezpur in the then Darrang district realized the need for establishing schools in the area for the Bodos. In 1843 another Rev. Cyrus Barkar, during his visit at Tezpur, he travelled in the Bodo villages of northern Darrang but could not do much for his credit.³⁶ At that time, observing the eagerness to accept the gospel by the Bodos of Kamrup and Darrang, Barker made several excursions among the Bodo tribe and convinced them to discuss on different matters. In 1848, A.H. Danforth after joining hands with Rev. Barkar and Ward had engaged in the task converting Bodos by catechizing and distributing Christian literature prepared in Bodo dialect. In the following year at the boarding school which was established by Barker in Guwahati the majority of the students were mainly drawn from the Bodo tribe.³⁷

After the revolt of 1857 the Government of India made new education policy. Accordingly the new mission society determined to dedicate for the cause of the Bodos. In 1864 the mission station was fully upgraded for the Bodos and Rev. C. H. Hesselmeyer was made the first in-charge of the Bodo Kachari Mission. In the same year twelve schools were established in Darrang for the Bodos and one for the Miri. Under the supervision of Rev. C. H. Hesselmeyer a numbers of 277 boys received elementary instructions mainly in Assamese with moderate use of Bengali in the said newly established schools.³⁸

It was in February, 1864 the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG) authority sent Sidney Endle to Tezpur in Assam as an assistant of Mr. Hesselmeyer to look after the Kachari mission.³⁹ After the arrival of Sidney Endle the task for propagation of Christianity among the Bodos became easier. He prepared the mother tongue of the Bodo rather than Assamese language in spreading gospel among them. He produced a numbers of books in Bodo, while in writing he used Roman script. His pioneer works opened up a new chapter for the growth of the Bodo language and literature.⁴⁰

In the last part of the 19th century the Lutheran Missionaries took the lead for missionary work among the Bodos of Goalpara district. In 1887 Rev. L.O. Skrefsrud during his evangelization work at district of Goalpara observed the enthusiasm among the Bodos and decided to establish a Bodo mission in the same year. On 17th January 1887 Teklo Basumatary of the Goalpara district was evangelized by the Santal Mission and became the first follower of the Mission among the Bodos. From 1891 to 1893 the Santal Mission established three schools in the district. To spread the Santal Mission Rev. Skrefsrud established the first Bodo Church at Rajadabri and on 5th January, 1911. Ratia Basumatary, was ordained and sanctified as the first Christian Ministry (pastor) of the church. By 1922, the Bodo congregations were established in many villages, such as Nangdarbari, Patakata, Kolabari, Gumurgaon, Gaurang, Dimbajhar, Bhatarmari, Karigaon and others. For the wellbeing of the Bodos, in 1929 the Mission set up a permanent Mission station at Gaurang near Kokrajhar along with a primary school. The school was later upgraded to the Middle English school and to a high school in 1947. In 1935, they established separate mission station for the Bodos at Bongaigaon along with a boarding school for the convenience of extending their work among the Bodos of other districts.⁴¹

In the early part of the twentieth century the American Baptist Missionaries along with Lutheran Missionaries had started their evangelization work among the Bodos in the Goalpara

district. In 1906, two Bodo boys attended the school for the training of workers which was conducted by Mr. Stephen. Due to absence of separate schools for Bodos in those days the Bodo students were had to attend in all grades of those schools in the Dhubri sub-division. There was no remarkable progress in educational field in the district of Goalpara up to 1930.⁴²

Umon K. Marak played an important role in the expansion of education among the Bodos in the district of Goalpara. In 1930, under his initiative the Balajhar Primary School was shifted to Tukrajhar with the establishment of one Boys' hostel there. Within the short period of time the activities of the Bodo Baptist Church spread to Burijhar, Bamugaon, West Patabari, East Balagari and other places. Further in 1933, Minaram Basumatary was sent by Guwahati Baptist Mission to look after and work among the Bodos of Goalpara district. The school run by Minaram Basumatary was the only school in the Goalpara, which received Mission aid in 1933. In 1936, the number of primary schools rose to 11 with 66 girls and 113 boys.⁴³ On 23 October, 1937 the new school was inaugurated at Tukrajhar and Minaram Basumatary was appointed as the headmaster and his wife as assistant teacher of the new M.E. School. In the beginning the school was enrolled with 43 boys and 15 girls' students with 4 teachers. By 1938 its enrollment increased to 93.⁴⁴ During pre-independence period in many Bodo populated areas the missionaries played their important role by establishing schools. Among the prominent places were- Bamungaon (1917), Tukrajhar (1929), Gaurang (1927), Harisinga (1931) and Barpetta (1936).⁴⁵

Literary contributions:

In the remote past the Bodo did not have any recognized written scripts of their own language. Therefore the Assamese and Bengali scripts were used in the newly established schools to teach the Bodo pupils. With an objective to make the Bodo language for the use of both teaching and preaching the Christian missionaries started to study the structures of the Bodo language and attempts were made to write the same in the Roman script. Thus, it cannot be denied that the Christian missionaries were mainly responsible in consolidating the foundation of the Bodo language and literature which gave an opportunity to the Bodo people to express their views in their own language. Lots of missionary work and pioneering initiatives brought the Bodo dialect on light by using the Roman script. Barker, Danforth and Ward from the American Baptist Mission took an actual step to put the Bodo dialect into a written form in 1848-49. They prepared a few religious books in the Bodo language though the script that was used by them was not known. C. H. Hesselmeyer translated the prayer books into the Bodo language in 1861. *The Miscellaneous Essays Relating to Indian Subject* of Brian H. Hodgson was published in 1880 in which he dealt the meanings of Bodo, Koch and Dhimal with English.⁴⁶

In 1884, S. Endle wrote *An Outline Grammar of Kachari or Mech Language* as spoken in district Darrang of Assam with illustrative sentences, notes, and reading. The book mainly dealt with the dialect of the Bodos of Darrang district. In 1865 during his stay at Bengbari he translated a part of the New Testament into Bodo language by using the Roman script for the use of religious teaching and in Sunday schools.⁴⁷ Endle wholeheartedly dedicated his entire life for the missionary works among the Bodo Kacharis. *An Outline Grammar of Kachari or Mech language* was regarded as the first ever in Bodo language written in Roman script by him.⁴⁸

The monograph of his writing *The Kachari* dealt with the great Kachari race of Boro or Bodo and their social, customs, religion and folk traditions.⁴⁹ The book also describes about the folk tales, folk songs and beliefs of the Bodo Kachari. It was written in Bodo language as well as in English simultaneously. Some of the folk tales which are mentioned in *The Kacharis* are as follows-

1. *Dwima Dwisani Khourang* (How the rivers were made)
2. *Sase Olsia Gothoni Khourang* (The Story of the Lazy Boy)
3. *Bamun Arw bini Sakor ni Khourang* (The Brahman and his Servant)
4. *Raona Raoni ni Khourang* (Kachari Theory of Thunder and Lightning).⁵⁰

Notably W.M. Dundas wrote a book *Grammar and Dictionary of the Kachari Language* and Dr. George Abraham Grierson wrote *Grammar and dictionary of Kachari Language 1906-1910* for the Bodos.⁵¹ Similarly the book entitled *A short Grammar of the Mech or Bodo language* written by Rev. L.O. Skrefsrud in 1889. In 1904, the book *Grammar and Dictionary of the Kachari* written by Rev. A. Kristiansen promulgated in the field of language development of the Bodos. The Bodo folk literature gained its momentum when J. D. Anderson published his book *A Collection of Kachari Folk Tales* in 1895 in which he also included the folk tales *Abrani Khourang* (Simpleton of Story), *Mwkhra arw Sessani Khourang* (The tale of the Monkey and the Hare) and *Sase Phalangi Gothoni Khourang* (The story of the merchant Boy) which are already given in appendix II of Endle's *The Kacharis*.⁵²

In 1929, *The Outline of the Tibeto-Burman Linguistic Morphology* was written by S. N. Wolfenden, which contains grammar of Bodo language. Rev. A. Kristiansen wrote the books for his credit viz; *Stories from the New Testament Bible*, *Bible Reading Books* and *Boro Songs Book*. Other translation works of Kristiansen in Bodo language were of *St Matthew's Gospel* in 1934, translation of all the four *Gospel* in 1936, translation of the *New Testament Bible* in 1937, *Jisu ni Jiu Kourang* and *Gwjam Rodaini Batra* in 1939. An important contribution towards the Bodo language was made by the British and Foreign Bible Society of Calcutta, by translating the "Bible" into the Bodo language in 1938. Rev. H. Holvorsrud and Rev. Maguram Mochahary wrote several books on Christianity in the Bodo language. These were *Jisuni Maonai Dongnai* in 1938, *Baibelni Godan Radai* and *Gojam Radaini Bathra* in 1939, *Sadhu Sunder Sing*, *Chandra Lila* and *Baibelni Solo* in 1942 and *Jisu Kritoni Modoini Solo* in 1944.⁵³ He also edited and published *Bodo English Dictionary* in 1968. In the work he added vocabulary of 2700 Bodo words.⁵⁴

Emergence of elite class and progress of literature:

Till the beginning of the 20th century the education among the Bodos in Assam was not up to the mark. Another fact for the lack of interest for education was that the Bodo people had never aspired for any government job while they never enjoyed such privileges under their former rulers like the Ahoms and the Koches.⁵⁵

The wake of western education and culture and the feelings of national consciousness gradually stirred up among the people of India and the rise of middle class and elites among the Bodos of Assam and their role for the upliftment of language, literature and culture of the society cannot be over looked.⁵⁶ It was started among the Bodos in the first decade of twentieth

century. In the early twenty century the active presence of Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma and his role towards the social reform movement was a virtual significant for the Bodos. It was due to the social malpractices in that period the Bodos were disliked by the other communities and often treated like untouchables.⁵⁷ Kalicharan realized that lack of education was the main factor behind the backwardness. For the first and foremost he initiated the task of social reform movement in the erstwhile Goalpara district. With the objective to reform the society Kalicharan declared crusade against illiteracy, social malpractice, habit of drinking and backwardness. Thus in 1907, Kalicharan founded and preached the Brahma religion among the masses. A school was established at Tipkai and encouraged the people to pursue education. Besides the socio-religious reform movement he also guided for the political movement to safe the political rights of the Bodos. It was during the visit of Simon Commission in Assam in 1926 Kalicharan with his group of followers submitted a memorandum to the commission. Karendra Brahma (Mondal), Belbung Chabedar Basumatary and Md. Giasuddin of Dhubri were accompanied along with Kalicharan. The memorandum contained demand regarding the religious, educational and most importantly political rights of the Bodo people. As a pioneer leader Kalicharan aroused the educated Bodo youths under his influence to work jointly for the social reformation movement.⁵⁸ Satish Chandra Basumatary, Rup Nath Brahma, Haladhar Brahma and Mada Ram Brahma were the active representative of the educated elite class of the then period. They worked like harbinger and led the active social, literary and cultural activities among the Bodos. They also laid the foundation of written literature in the Bodo language by publishing journals like *Bibar* and *Jenthoka*.⁵⁹

Bodo customary law book entitled *Bodoni Phisa O Aiyen* in Bengali script and published by Habraghat Bodo Sanmilani in 1915 occupied a very important place in the history of Bodo literature as it is regarded as the first book of the Bodos. The Bodo Satra Sanmilani was formed in 1919 by a group of enthusiastic youths who initiated the process to literary activities. In 1920 the first Bodo magazine *Bibar* was published in handwritten form. Many of the authors like Satish Chandra Basumatary, Sobharam Brahma Choudhury, Modaram Brahma, Rupnath Brahma, Khagendranath Brahma etc had contributed their write-up to the journal called *Bibar* for publication. Not only the *Bibar* publication, others publications namely *Zenthoka* (1926), *Hathorki Hala* (1932) and *Alongbar* (1938) were came up to which many enthusiastic poets and authors devoted themselves and exposed the knowledge and wisdom through their writings of poems, essays, stories and plays.⁶⁰ *Bathunam Baikhaguni Gidu Khonthaimethai* and *Bodoni Gudi Sibsa arw Aroj*) were the books of the Bodos which were brought to light in 1920, 1923 and 1926 respectively. The collection of verses composed in these books mainly garnered from the oral traditional songs and verses which has trending from ancestors.⁶¹

The birth of The *Bodo Chatra Sanmilani* (1919) exerted remarkable influence on the conscience of the new generation of western educated Bodo youths in the state. Bodo students and gentlemen from different districts of Assam viz. Goalpara, Nagaon, Kamrup, Lakhimpur and even from West Bengal participated in the annual sessions of the *Sanmilani*. The sessions of the *Sanmilani* gradually became the means of unity among the scattered Bodo population of different parts of the country to work together for the development of the Bodo language and literature. The *Bodo Chatra Sanmilani*, which was known earlier as *Goalpara Jilla Bodo Chatra Sanmilani*, which was founded under the initiative of educated Bodo youths namely Rupnath Brahma, Satish Chandra Basumatary, Modaram Brahma and Iswan Mushahary.⁶² The first Annual Conference was held at Kokrajhar and its first general secretary was Satish Chandra

Basumatary. Gurudev Kalicharan was made the Chief Guest in the first session of the Sanmilani. In the session he appealed the Bodo students' community and mass to take deep interest in education.

Furthermore with the view to spread the social reform movement throughout the Assam and to involve the Bodo students the *Bodo Chatra Sanmilani* was again renamed as *Sadou Aham Bodo Chatra Sanmilani*. The first conference of the newly renamed student union was held in 1925 where the renowned Assamese literary laureate, Nilmani Phukan delivered his valuable lecture on the modern aspects of education and stressed the need of the Bodo students and its responsibility in bringing change in the most backward Bodo society.⁶³

For the convenient of literary study based on the periodic phase, the rise of Bodo language and literature has been classified into four distinct periods:

1. The era of missionary began from the publication of book entitled- *An Outline Grammar of Kachari or Mech Language* by Rev. S. Endle in 1884, up to the formation of *Bodo Chatra Sanmilan* in 1919.
2. The *Bibar Muga* or *Bibar* age commenced in 1920, right from the preparation for the publication of the periodical, *Bibar* in 1924 and continued up to the publication of another magazine known as *Alongbar*.
3. The *Alongbar Muga* or *Alongbar* age started in 1938 with the publication of the periodical *Alongbar* magazine and lasted up to 1951.
4. The period after the formation of the *Bodo Sahitya Sabha* in 1952 and onwards is regarded as the modern period of the Bodo literature.⁶⁴

Critically analyzing the literary development of the Bodo language, Riju Kumar Brahma has divided it into following the three phases:

- (1) Early phase
 - (a) Religious worship hymn (b) Oral literature
- (2) Middle Phase
 - (a) Missionary and non-missionary literature
 - (b) Renaissance of Bodo literature (from 1919 to 1952)
- (3) Modern Phase (from 1952 onwards)⁶⁵

The early phase of the Bodo literature confine to the religious base literature. It preserved the tradition from generation to generation by orally in verse. In worshipping various gods and goddess the religious slogs and mantras were chanted in verbally. The oral literature can be found in the form of folk tales, songs, ballads, phrases, riddles, seasonal festival songs etc. The early folk literatures transited from the immemorial times before it got the shape of written form. The middle age of Bodo literature may be connote from 1884, the literary contributions of the missionaries and up to the sprung up of Bodo literature from 1919 to 1952 before the birth of Bodo Sahitya Sabha.⁶⁶ In that period the literature of the Bodo got the opportunity to sow the seeds of versatile genius. The modern age of the Bodo literature can be assumed from 1952 onwards after the foundation of Bodo Sahitya Sabha in the same year.

Bibar Period (1920-1937):

According to Monoranjan Lahary the periodisation of *Bibar* age is attributed from 1920 to 1937. That period is regarded as the foundation of Bodo literature and majority of the Bodo literary critics accept that periodisation as the *Bibar* age. Soon after the formation of Bodo Chatra Sanmilani the initiative for the task of creation of *Bibar* magazine was started. The *Bibar* magazine was published from 1924 to 1925, comprising eight (8) issues in total and Satish Chandra Basumatary was made the first chief editor of it. The main motto for the creation of the *Bibar* Magazine was to enrich the Bodo language and literature and also to bring socio-cultural awareness among the contemporary Bodo society. The magazine was in the form of multilingual as the articles published in it were in Bodo, Assamese and Bengali languages. Satish Chandra Basumatary, the General Secretary of the magazine also penned down his editorial words in Bengali. Due to that nature of multilingual characters of the magazine some of the Bodo critics happened to criticize it as *Kisiri* (blended). Moreover Dinanath Basumatary also remarked as “*Bibar laisikou dihunnai jadwngmwn Boro, Asomia arw Bangla raoywi. Jerao rao arw harini rwikatini batra phwidwng beyao be gangse laisiyaonw Borojwng lwgwse Asomia arw Bangla raoywibw lirnai.*”⁶⁷

Free English translation

Bibar magazine was published in Bodo, Assamese and Bengali language. The motto of the magazine was to inspire and preserve the language and race of the community, even though the languages written in the magazines were in multilingual which is questionable.

Monoranjan Lahary also did not support completely the way of multilingual nature of the *Bibar* magazine. However, most of the western educated Bodo students contributed in the magazine through their writings in Bodo, Assamese and Bengali for the cause of social reform among the Bodos. They contributed prose, poems, songs, essays, stories etc. The nature of the writings of the *Bibar* period was classical, mystic, instructional and moral lessons.⁶⁸

While depending on the multilingual nature of *Bibar* magazine Brajendra Kumar Brahma has very clearly cited that on the critical and must needed reformation situation of the then Bodos society, the *Boro Chatra Sanmilani* with very cautiously and farsightedly undertook that step to publish the magazine in multilingual. Bodos were started to adopt other culture and tradition instead of their own before the formation of *Boro Chatra Sanmilani*. Out of chaotic social environment some learned youths of the Bodos awaken and realized to revive the unity among the society. With that motto in view the *Boro Chatra Sanmilani* initiated to publish *Bibar* magazine with three multilingual i.e. Bodo, Assamese and Bangla. They had an intention in their mind to use solely the Bodo language usually when the great masses realized to accept their culture and tradition. Inspiring their constructive deeds many organizations were born in different parts in Assam, viz; *Dangguri (Kachari) Yubak Sanmilani* in Lakhimpur, *Lalung Sanmilani*, *Kamrup Boro Samaj Sanskar Komity*, *Kamrup Boro Unnati Sadhini Sabha* etc.⁶⁹

Architects of the Bibar period and their literary contribution:

The following were the architects of Bodo literature during *Bibar* age.

Satish Chandra Basumatary:

Amongst the architects of *Bibar* period Satish Chandra Basumatary is regarded as the first important person who always followed the path of the truth. He was made the chief editor

of the magazine *Bibar* and *Jenthoka*.⁷⁰ Soon after the publication of *Bibar*, the *Jenthoka* was first published in 1925. The emergence of the *Bibar* and *Jenthoka* under the banner of *Boro Chatra Sanmilani*, many enthusiastic writers of the Bodos had sprung up.⁷¹ Satish Chandra Basumatary also helped Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma for the completion of the compilation of *Boroni Pandulipi* (Social Law of the Bodos). Being the chief editor of *Bibar* magazine, Satish Chandra Basumatary wrote three proses i.e. *Dao Swngbainai*, *Batrani Serwi Solo* and *Gomo honai noni batra* disguising with the pet name as Srimati Rongdini Pagli.⁷² Among his poems like *Bima Fisa*, *Ja Habab*, *Habab Fongbai Godai* etc. were most popular.⁷³ The last two poems were published at *Konthai-Methai* in *Methai* (songs) section of Rupnath Brahma and Modaram Brahma in 1923⁷⁴. Besides that he also wrote some dramas in Bodo to his credit. His most of the dramas were Five-Act-Drama. *Nalabuha* play was his first One-Act-Play and recognized as the first among the Bodos. Some other dramas of Satish Chandra Basumatary were *Dorswn Jwhwlao*, *Rani Laimuti*, *Naipin Jaywi*, *Bikhani Oar*. But unfortunately most of his original manuscripts were lost due to improper maintenance.⁷⁵

Rupnath Brahma:

Rupnath Brahma never hesitated to contribute his literary creativity for his community being his half of the life involved in the politics as MLA and MP of Lok Sabha successively. During his student life in the Cotton College in Guwahati he along with Modaram Brahma compiled a book *Konthai-Methai* (Poem and Songs) in 1923. It was an anthology of poems and songs in Bodo. Since then the journey of the literary activity started in his life. He contributed nine (9) poems- *Apha Gojong* (Father, the brightness), *Iswarni Nam Gwdwi* (The name of God is Sweet), *Iswarniao Binai* (Praying to God), *Boroni Kwtha*, *Boroni Bathra* (The news and Views of the Bodo), *Mwnhasoywi Houwa* (Unaccessible Person), *Habab Dinwilai* (What a day Today), *Habab Tangnaya Tangdwng* (Oh, Gone are Gone), *Habab Bima* (Oh Mother) and *Mairong Magigra Sengrapwrni Methai* (Songs of Rice Begging Youths) in the book named *Konthai-Methai* in section of *Methai* (songs). Most of the themes in the songs were solely based on the nature of mystic and spiritual.⁷⁶

Rupnath Brahma also contributed five poems in the poetry section of the *Konthai-Methai*. *Bibar Khanai* (pluck of flower), *Angni Khwina* (My bride), *Lekha Rwnghla Gunda Jaya* (), *Aoua Paoa* (pondering) and *Swrkhon Nwngswr Malai Nongdwng* (whom do you think stranger) are of his poems.⁷⁷ His writing was not confined only to the Bodos but also touched Assamese, Bengali and English.

Boro Kacharies (English), *Boro Jatir Songskipt Poriso* (Assamese), *Boro Kachari Jatir Somondei* (Assamese), *Milan Songit* (Bengali poem) and *Ahaban* (Bengali) are of his important contributions in the prose and essays. Besides literary and political activities, Rupnath Brahma was also involved in the social reform activities. It was on the call of Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma, he took active participation in the compilation task of the *Boroni Pandulipi* and made it a grand success to bring out among the Bodos. He was made the General Secretary of the then Boro Chatra Sanmilani. He was also the active member of Tribal League later it came to be known as Tribal Sangha.⁷⁸

Padmashree Madaram Brahma:

Madaram Brahma served as Block Development Officer under Assam Government. During his on and off service he did lots of social activity works for the welfare of the people.⁷⁹

He has lots of contribution in the establishment of the school and colleges to enrich the education in his locality. The schools and colleges were:

- (i) Bidyapith High School, Kokrajhar.
- (ii) Kokrajhar College, Kokrajhar.
- (iii) Kokrajhar Higher Secondary School, Kokrajhar.
- (iv) B.T. College, Kokrajhar.⁸⁰
- (v) Kokrajhar Girls High school, Kokrajhar.
- (vi) Rashtrabhasa Vidyapith, Kokrajhar.⁸¹

From the early age of student life Modaram Brahma had in-depth interest in the field of literary creation. He was a poet, dramatist and essayist. He was also an active member of the then *Boro Chatra Sanmilan*. In 1926 in the age of 23 years he composed a mystic poem entitled *Aroj* (The Pray). The poems which he wrote were mainly based on nationalism. His another work was *Boroni Gudi Sibsha Arw Aroj* which was published in 1926 and translated it into English by Monoranjan Lahary. The Government of India awarded *Padmashree* civilian award to him in 1988 on his book *Boroni Gudi Sibsha Arw Aroj* in recognition of his literary work. The main theme of the poem was classical and mystic dealing with the full philosophical thoughts of Bathou religion and true paths to attain God and salvation.⁸²

Konthai -Methai was composed jointly by Rupnath Brahma and Madaram Brahma in 1923 during his college life in cotton College. In this songs and the poetry book, Modaram Brahma had contributed as many as fourteen poems which are

In the song section of the *Konthai-Methai* book the fourteen (14) poems written by Modaram Brahma - *Ondw Jwngkoubw Aapa, Aapa Laori, Aiyo Dodere Mainao, Aiyo Bibar, Aiyo Bima Swr Jadwng, Jakangdw Boropwr, Doito Hwnjabla, Databaiswi Aapapwr, Fwidwng Bifa Didwisw, Bung Boropwr, Lekha Pwrwng, Habab Jwngni Boro, Habab Dhwrwm Gwywi* and *Hei Dhwrwm Aapa* viz: are also incorporated. In the poetry section of *Konthai Methai* he composed two poems namely *Swnabni Boro* and *Dani Boro Fisa*.⁸³ Modaram Brahma was not only renowned poet and essayist but also a good writer of drama as well. His dramas like *Raimali* (1926), *Dimapur Nwgrw Bainai* and *Sodang Bwirari* were most popular and remarkable during *Bibar* period.⁸⁴

Darendra Nath Basumatary:

Darendra Nath Basumatary was the lover of drama since his childhood. Because of his attention to drama he had undergone three month training for theatrical art of performance and direction in Kolkata. In the writing of his drama the influence of the Bengali are found to some extent. *Raja Nilambar* was first drama written by Darendra Nath Basumatary which is regarded as historical drama.⁸⁵ The dramas namely *Sukharu-Dukharu, Bima Batul, Juli- Bijuli, Sitranggoda, Rangalu Jwhlwao, Onason-Kalason, Nihari, Donek Raja* and *Sonani Maibong* are of his writing. His dramas reveal the versatile characters of role for e.g. love of his country, patriotism and sacrifice, save of women's dignity, bosom love of his culture.⁸⁶ He also composed numerous songs and poems. Among the most noted songs were *Jwhlwao Jaliya Gothofor Jong* (We are the brave children of brave ancestors), *Ma Ise Mwjang Dinwini Horalai* (What a beautiful night), *Jagai Jennai* (Beginning). Most of his poems depicted the elements of romanticism and spirit of nationalism.⁸⁷

Kitish Brahma:

Kitish Brahma of the *Bibar* period wrote many poems and prose and essays. He had the beautiful nature of creativity in his writings. His most of the poems reflects the deep philosophical thoughts of life.⁸⁸ Among the most important poems left by him were *Gasa Saonai*, *Okhanaisi*, *Bwisagu Garja* etc. The poem *Gasa Saonai* was his first poem appeared in the *Bibar* magazine's first edition of 3rd issue, 1924. *Gasa Saonai* defines the meaning of lighting lamp and therefore through the poem he tried to denote that the *Bibar* is as the symbolic of wisdom and enlightening among the Bodos and to eradicate the evils in the society.⁸⁹

Prasanna Kumar Boro Kakhlyar:

Prasanna Kumar Boro Kakhlyar's work was versatile in every field for which he can be credited as singer, dramatist, social reformer, culturist, and one of the first writers among the Bodos. He left accountable writings of his own creation but due to lack of proper maintenance his original sources were scattered. The literary works of Prasanna Kumar Boro Kakhlyar were *Khemta Gaon*, *Benar Gaon*, *Bashir Puran*, *Bathou Bishoi*, *Adhya Kandha* (1914), *Bathunam Bwikhaguni Gidu* (1920) and *Ahom- Boroni Daoha* (History).

The dramas which were credited to the Bodo literature by Prasanna Kumar Kakhlyar were *Laxmanar Shaktishel* (Assamese), *Bardwi Sikhla*, *Daoka Rajani Gyan*, *Jungni Boro Raja Arw Bithangni Mungdangkasin Bhaotina* and *Ahom- Boroni Daoha*.⁹⁰ Among his works the *Bathunam Bwikhaguni Gidu* is the religious hymn forms to appease and pray for almighty *Brai Bathou*.⁹¹ The book is contained of six (6) lyrical devotional songs.⁹²

Some other prolific writers of the *Bibar* period were also can be credited to Bishnu Charan Basumatary, Jagendar Nath Kachari, Porchuram Brahma, Jolodhar Brahma⁹³, Moniram Islyar, Nabin Brahma, Umesh Chandra Mwsahary etc.⁹⁴ The *Hampe Phalla* (1924) of Moniram Islyar is regarded as the first theatrical Bodo drama. The translation work of Moniram Islyar from Bengali to Bodo are *Bima Batul* (Step Mother), *Mewar Kumari*, *Niyoti*, *Basspati Mishra*, *Pap Mukthi* and *Raj Puja*.⁹⁵

Alongbar Period:

The *Alongbar* period or *Alongbar* period of Bodo literature marked with the periodical publication of *Alongbar* magazine in 1938 which was jointly edited by Pramad Chandra Brahma and Khagendra Nath Brahma which continued upto 1951 before the birth of Bodo Sahitya Sabha in 1952.⁹⁶ Enthusiastic Bodo youths like Darendra Nath Basumatary, Kali Kumar Lahary, Ishan Mushahary, Ananda Mochahary, Moniram Sumpramhary, Mohini Mohan Brahma etc. contributed their valuable articles in this magazine.⁹⁷ In the history of Bodo literature *Alongbar* period is recognised as another epoch in the growth and development of Bodo literature.⁹⁸

The emergence of *Bibar* and its flying soar encouraged the new generation to dedicate themselves for the zeal of literary creation. The reformation movement among the Bodos got high impetus with the means of literary creation by the new generation in the *Alongbar* era. The sowing seeds of reformation movement of the Bodos in the the *Bibar* period was about to be ripen to harvest the fruits of the movement in that period. There was the remarkable change and progress in the society due to the wave of literary and other social reformation activities in compare to the past society. That proved to be the culmination of series magazine and poem

books like *Bodosa Bithorai* (1932), *Sanshree arw Mushsri* (1937), *Hathoki Hala* (1940), *Sonani Mala* (1940), *Phame* (1940), *Nayak* (1942) which were created by the educated youths in the *Alongbar* period. They brought the new trends of writing style in the Bodo literature.⁹⁹

Architects of Alongbar Period and their literary contribution:

The *Alongbar* period produced versatile writers in various literary fields like poem, drama, essay, short stories and songs. Among the most remarkable architects of *Alongbar* period were as follows:

Pramod Chandra Brahma:

Since the student life Pramod Chandra Brahma had keen interest to devote him for the cause of Bodo language and literature.¹⁰⁰ In 1932 he wrote and published a magazine *Borosa Bithorai*. Some other series of magazines namely *Sanshri Arw Mushri (Roop O Sintadhara)* in 1937, *Alongbar* in 1938, *Hathorki Hala* in 1940 and *Sonaki Bijab* were edited and published by him. His writings and creations encouraged many new generation of Bodo youths to expose their talent in the literary field in various ways.¹⁰¹ The *Bwisagu*, *Pagli*, *Jwhwlao Dwimalu* etc. were the prose of Pramod Chandra Brahma.¹⁰² Same as like in the *Bibar* magazine, most of the articles in the *Alongbar* were also written in Assamese and Bengali language.¹⁰³ The hassle of script revealed when Pramod Chandra Brahma opened up his viewpoint regarding the use of script in his editorial introduction as:

“Boro bhasar karone aami konto aakor grohon korim? Ei ata dangor homosya hoi porise.....Bangla ba Asomiya aakhor aru Roman ortat English aakhor aei dueotar majot kontu lom? Aei hoise kotha.....”

Free translation

Which script we would accept for the Bodo language? That is one of the major problems.....either Assamese or Bangla or Roman script which would be the most acceptable? That's the matter.¹⁰⁴

Pramod Chandra Brahma brought new trends of the writing style in the Bodo poetry. The *Hathorki Hala* and *Sonaki Bijab* were the most worthy book of Pramod Chandra Brahma. His poems like *Hayeni Suphin*, *Dwi Bajrum*, *Un-Daha*, *Jiuni Belasiyao*, *Thwinai*, *Gami Gwdan*, *Songsharni Onthai* and *Bima Fisa* reflect the nature of mystic, romanticism and love of Mother Nature. Therefore Heremba Narzary regarded him as the *Alongbar* (polestar) of Bodo poem. He was also compiled a Bodo-English-Hindi dictionary.¹⁰⁵

Iswan Mushahary:

Iswan Mushahary was one of the greatest iconic romantic poets of the *Alongbar* period. Within very short span of life he left pioneer literary works in the history of Bodo literature. High standard of romanticism, in-depth love of beauty of nature and elegy as like the western poems are found in his poems, therefore the critics compared him with the western poet John Keats. Madhuram Boro has cited the poetry of Iswan Mushahary as ‘*romantic ideals unparallel in theme and attitude.*’ The real tastes of literary creations of Iswan Mushahary are found in his two books *Sonani Mala* and *Phame*. His poems were also published in the *Hathorki Hala* and

Sonakhi Bijab books. *Sonani Mala*, the literary work of Iswan Mushahary also included the poems like *Badari*, *Mwnabili*, *Gwsw Mwblib*, *Mwdwi Berekha*, *Gwthwibari* etc.¹⁰⁶

Iswan Mushahary also contributed short stories in the field of Bodo literature. He wrote *Abari*, the first short story of Bodo which was published in *Hathorkhi Hala* edited by Pramod Chandra Brahma. This made the strong of foundation of short story in Bodo literature. In his writing the skill of presentation, characterization and the plot of the story are highly commendable and standard.¹⁰⁷ The story tells about the social, tradition and economic situation of the Bodos of then period.

Kali Kumar Lahary:

Kali Kumar Lahary was also another important Bodo writer in the *Alongbar* period with his contribution - *Lwqw Konthai Bihung*, *Agju*, *Kriya Darpan* and *Konthai Bijab*. He also contributed his poems like *Bibar*, *Dodere pangdang*, *Jaorikhang Boro*, *Jakhar Boibw Boro Bima*, *Sadu Sikhao* to different books.¹⁰⁸ He was lyricist, dramatist as well as poet.¹⁰⁹ Influenced by the work of Satish Chandra Basumatary and Darendra Nath Basumatary he reproduced a lyrical book in the form of poetry named *Konthai Bihung* (1952). Most of his poems and essays were found in the magazines *Alongbar* and *Hathorkhi Hala* edited by Pramod Chandra Brahma. The nature of his poetry writing followed the style of classical and romanticism. Another unique tones found in his poems are satirical and didacticism.¹¹⁰ Through the satirical tone of poems he urged the people to keep aside from the social malpractices and to get rid of intoxicant liquor.

Anandaram Mushahary:

Anandaram Mushahary was regarded as the greatest prose writer of the *Alongbar* period of the Bodo literature. His works on the prose are *Boroni Rao*, *Aglani Bathra* and *Noni Maidang*. In his works he made painstaking effort to discuss the condition of Bodos language and its future, culture and tradition. In his the *Noni Maidang* the attitude of the Bodo women and their role in the society are depicted. The art of writing of Anandaram Mushahary was farsighted skillful in expressing the certain thoughts. He has the core love of his mother tongue.¹¹¹

Jagot Basumatary:

Jagot Basumatary was also one of the highly standard poets among the *Alongbar* period. *Udang Bwthwr*, *Panphiwali Dao*, *Dao Khouwo* and *Bwigasu* are his contribution in the field of the Bodo literature. The poems of Jagot Basumatary signify that he was the man of nature. He was a very talented poet in symbolizing and personifying the objects of nature through his rhythm of poetries.¹¹²

Brajen Islary:

Brajen Islary wrote a poem book named *Gwswni Daha*. The elegy and pathos of young age were reflected through that poem. The poem also depicted the shadow of his beautiful beloved.

Moniram Sampramary:

Moniram Sampramary was a poet of the *Alongbar* period. His poem *Angni Simang* was appeared in the *Alongbar* magazine. It was a poem of deep thought. He was contemporary poet of Iswan Mushahary and once he rendered financial help to the latter for publishing the book

Sonani Mala. He also wrote some prose regarding the social and political condition of the Bodos living in the West Bengal.¹¹³

Jaybhadra Hagjer:

Jaybhadra Hagjer has left lots of contribution for the development of Bodo language and literature. In spite of cabinet minister of Assam and MP of Rajya Sabha, he also devoted himself for the task of language and literary developmental activities. He was made the first ever president of the Bodo Sahitya Sabha in the first session held at Basugaon town on 16 November 1952. During his president-ship got the opportunity to serve as the ardent lover of literature.¹¹⁴

Ananda Brahma:

Ananda Brahma was also popularly known as Akhadaria. He contributed mostly poems to the Bodo literature. The tones of impulsive nature were found in his poems to bring awareness among the downtrodden Bodo society of the then period. In the session of *Habraghat Boro Sanmilani*, *Assam Boro Mahasanmilani* and *Assam Boro Chatra Sanmilani* he devoted himself for the task of social reformation and social development activities of the Bodo society.¹¹⁵

Conclusion:

Prior to the advent of the British administration in Assam the education scenario of the Bodos was very poor. It was only after the introduction of the new education policies by the government in Assam in the successive periods the formal education started among the Bodos. As a result of which the western educated youths brought the wave of reformation movement in the Bodo society. The genesis of Boro Chatra Sanmilani is noted to be the turning point of the grooming of Bodo literature. It gave the youths the platform to explore and express their knowledge in the *Bibar* and *Alongbar* period. It was under the leadership of Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma for the task of social reformation movement, many elites of Bodo youths were devoted themselves for the upliftment of the society. The spread of literary awareness had began to touch in the nook and corner of the Bodo inhabited area of Assam which resulted to form *Sodou Assam Pragotisil Kochari Sanmilan* in 1940 at Ulubari, Guwahati. Under the banner of this organization the *Nayak* magazine was published in 1947 and Mahini Mahan Brahma was made its editor. In the first edition of the magazine the articles were published in only Assamese language but from the second edition it became multilingual with inclusion of Bodo articles in Bodo languages. It was in the later period the magazine became as the mouthpiece of the tribals' of Assam. Bishnu Prasad Rabha's *Siphung Bahirsur* found in the magazine portrays various datas and information regarding the culture of the Bodos. He mentioned Brahmaputra River as the *Burlungbutur* in his article. But after the *Alongbar period* and before the birth of *Bodo Sahitya Sabha* the acceleration of Bodo literature was impeded uncertainly. The zeal for new literary creation was found absent among the Bodo writers after the *Alongbar* period.

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¹⁰⁹ Riju Kumar Brahma, *op.cit.* p.124
¹¹⁰ Riju Kumar Brahma, *op.cit.* pp.124-125

¹¹¹ Monoranjana Lahary, *op.cit.* pp. 83-84

¹¹² *Ibid.* p. 77

¹¹³ *Ibid.* pp. 77-86.

¹¹⁴ Dhananjay Basumatary, *Gwswkhangthao Boro Subungpwr*, N.L. Publications, Kokrajhar, 2011, pp.119-121

¹¹⁵ Brajendra Kumar Brahma, *op.cit.* p. 42.